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Teacher Satisfaction And Staff Morale In International Schools

Kevin Frank Yoshihara

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TEACHER SATISFACTION AND STAFF MORALE IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

By

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B.Ed. (University of Victoria) 1997
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A DISSERTATION

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TEACHER SATISFACTION AND STAFF MORALE IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

Staff morale and professional satisfaction may have a profound effect on staff retention in international schools. Current literature concerning teacher staff morale and job satisfaction has considered the topic from the perspective of teachers working in their home countries. Expatriate international school teachers live and work in foreign countries, often away from their families and relatives, and little research on this experience could be located. The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) study was to determine the factors that contribute to staff morale and influence teacher job satisfaction within international schools. As the economic and intangible costs of a high staff turnover can cause strain on schools, determining the factors that lead to high staff morale and job satisfaction in international education might produce a positive impact on international schools. Four superordinate themes emerged as a result of the analysis. These superordinate themes revealed that expatriate international school teachers feel that positive interactions with school leaders, inequalities in salary and benefits, a supportive school climate, and integration into the host community all have an impact on staff morale. The development of trusting relationships and feeling appreciated and valued were indicated to have a positive effect on morale, while inequalities in salary and benefits had a negative effect. This study confirmed that expatriate international school teachers’ reliance on their schools included not only employment, but socialization and the satisfaction of basic needs. By identifying the factors that affect staff morale within international schools, the findings from this study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding staff morale and teacher job satisfaction. Examining the lived experience of expatriate international school teachers, and
exploring the factors they felt affect staff morale and job satisfaction will allow international school administrators to develop plans to address morale and job satisfaction issues within their schools.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Staff morale and professional satisfaction may have a profound effect on staff retention in schools. There are many factors that can have an impact on staff morale. Mackenzie (2007) noted that low staff morale is caused by various aspects, including the low salary in comparison to other professions, poor student behavior, an excessive workload, inadequate leadership, poor working conditions, and the low professional status of teachers within the community. Mackenzie (2007) referred to the low professional status of teachers as how teachers are viewed in society and that there is a belief by the public that anyone can teach.

Researchers have identified various influences on teacher satisfaction and its outcomes. Perrachione, Petersen, and Rosser (2008) explained that three major influences on teacher job satisfaction are teacher demographic variables, role-related characteristics, and work experiences. Demographic variables include age, gender, marital status, and grade level taught. Role-related characteristics that affect job satisfaction include role ambiguity and stress. Research has also noted that positive experiences such as nurturing student learning, collaborating with colleagues, and receiving recognition from supervisors as having a positive impact on teacher satisfaction. Perrachione et al. (2008) further described the three main characteristics of teacher job satisfaction as retention, attrition, and minimal absenteeism.

In his article on reducing teacher turnover, Norton (1999) explained that 25% of teachers in the U.S. leave the profession after one year and that only 50% remain after five years. The factors described by Norton that contribute to the loss of talented teachers in education are very similar to those outlined by Mackenzie (2007). These factors include poor student behavior, lack of teacher autonomy, school climate, inadequate administrative leadership, and limited parent support. While Norton’s statistics come from the United States, similar outcomes can be found in
other countries as well. Greenfield (2015) explained that “according to government statistics, ‘wastage’ amongst the English teaching profession has reached 10 per cent per annum; this equates to around 50,000 teachers leaving the profession every year” (p. 52). He further explained that factors such as excessive workload and stress are commonly cited as key reasons for deciding to leave the profession.

The effects of teacher turnover on schools have also been identified through research. Apart from financial strains, there are other costs of a high staff turnover within a school. According to Guin (2004), intangible costs of high staff turnover include difficulty in implementing a clear curriculum, decreased relational trust among teachers, parents, and administrators, and “increased strain on working relationships” (p. 3). Staff morale and teacher job satisfaction can have an impact on teacher retention. Perrachione et al. (2008) concluded in their study on teacher retention that teachers who experience intrinsic motivation, such as job satisfaction, are more likely to remain at a school and in the profession.

Teachers choose to enter international education for many reasons. Search Associates (2018), an international education recruitment agency, explained that the benefits of teaching internationally include career growth, potential for financial savings, adventure, and the chance to meet and work with many people. Hardman (2001) noted that the most cited reason for joining and remaining in an international school was professional advancement, and a happy working climate was the second.

In their study on international school teacher retention in Southeast Asia, Mancuso, Roberts, and White (2010) found that between 2006 and 2009, the teacher turnover rate was 19%. In international education, many school faculties are comprised of numerous nationalities. The recruiting of an international staff can be very time consuming and expensive. The financial
costs of replacing a teacher, according to Norton (2009), can amount to about 25% of that teacher’s yearly salary.

A high rate of staff turnover can be damaging to a school. It can have a negative effect on the quality of education, it projects an image of instability in the organization, and it is financially costly (Guin, 2004). According to Mancuso et al. (2010) school performance and the quality of education is disrupted by high turnover. Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) noted that through the recruiting, hiring, and training of new teachers, teacher turnover may financially impact schools significantly. A high attrition rate, according to Darling-Hammond (2003), means that these schools need to use funds meant for school improvement to hire and train new teachers. This, she continued, often produces little long-term benefits for student achievement.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite a thorough review of the current literature on teacher morale and job satisfaction by this researcher, little research pertaining to morale and satisfaction could be found regarding international schools. Expatriate international school teachers live and work in foreign countries, often away from their families and relatives, and little research on this experience could be located. As the economic and intangible costs of a high staff turnover can cause tremendous strain on schools, determining the factors that lead to high staff morale and job satisfaction in international education might produce a positive impact on international schools. In their study on teacher retention in Southeast Asia, Mancuso et al. (2010) noted a higher turnover in profit vs. non-profit international schools. They also noted that satisfaction with pay and perceived effectiveness of the school head affected teacher decisions to stay or leave the school.

Based on the nature of international education, and the motives teachers have for entering international teaching, some schools experience high staff turnover. This turnover is financially costly and Guin (2004) claimed that estimates can reach as high as 150% of the teacher’s salary,
depending on the variables used to calculate the replacement cost. Studies that focus on teacher job satisfaction and staff morale in specific countries and school districts do not adequately address the situation within international schools. To date, the majority of research about staff morale and teacher job satisfaction has considered the topic from the perspective of a teacher working in their home country. In order to address this gap in the research, a goal of this study was to determine the factors that lead to high staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to determine the factors that contribute to staff morale and influence teacher job satisfaction within international schools. A high staff retention rate not only provides consistency, it paints a positive picture of the school within the eyes of the community and can benefit the school economically (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The focus of this study was to determine the factors expatriate international school teachers felt contribute to staff morale and job satisfaction through an examination of their lived experience. Determining the factors expatriate international school teachers felt affected staff morale and job satisfaction might allow international school administrators to develop plans to address morale and job satisfaction issues within their schools.

**Research Question**

Staff morale and teacher job satisfaction are affected by numerous factors. Expatriate teachers may have different perceptions regarding the factors that affect staff morale and teacher job satisfaction in international schools. The researcher wanted to determine any and all factors expatriate teachers felt affect staff morale and job satisfaction. Guiding this research were two overarching questions:
1. How do expatriate international school teachers perceive staff morale and teacher job satisfaction?

2. How does the experience of living as an expatriate affect staff morale and job satisfaction for international school teachers?

**Conceptual Framework**

Staff morale and teacher job satisfaction in schools are affected by numerous factors. Teaching as an expatriate in a foreign country can create additional challenges that may lead to attrition. To organize this study, three theories were applied to better understand human motivation and acculturation. As this study focused on staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention in international schools, it was guided by Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory, Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy, and culture shock theory (Winkelman, 1994). Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory attempted to identify those factors that lead to job satisfaction and motivation (Luthans, 2011). Factors that have an effect, according to Luthans (2011), are divided into two categories: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are those elements that provide motivation, while hygiene factors are those measures put in place to prevent dissatisfaction.

Maslow’s hierarchy states that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2017). This theory is often represented as a 5-tier pyramid with the most basic needs at the bottom, and self-actualization at the top. The most basic needs are physiological, safety, and social needs. According to this theory, the basic needs at the lower levels of the pyramid must be met before a person can be sufficiently motivated to challenge the upper levels. In order to determine whether the expatriate teacher’s basic needs were met and where this support came from, particularly in the first year in the country, Maslow’s hierarchy was used as a framework.

Culture shock, according to Winkelman (1994), is “a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture” (p. 121). Elmer (2002)
further defined culture shock as occurring “when you experience frustration from not knowing the rules or having the skills for adjusting to a new culture” (p. 44). Through culture shock theory the experiences a person encounters when moving into a new culture are differentiated into phases. These phases, according to Oberg (1960), are a reaction to frustration and anxiety caused by the loss of familiar signs and symbols.

Staff morale and teacher job satisfaction are factors that can be studied at any school location. While Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory assisted this researcher in identifying the factors that motivate teachers, the application of Maslow’s hierarchy and culture shock theory assisted in understanding how morale and job satisfaction were affected by the expatriate experience. The experience of living and working in a foreign culture is different than that of a teacher working in their home country. The application of Maslow’s hierarchy allowed the researcher to discuss with participants whether their basic needs were met, how they were met, and how they believed this affected staff morale and job satisfaction. The application of culture shock theory allowed the researcher to discuss with participants their level of cultural adjustment and how they felt this affected staff morale and job satisfaction.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

Through the implementation of a phenomenological approach, this study attempted to describe “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). For the purposes of this study, the population was composed of those with experience living and teaching in an international school. The aim of IPA research, according to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), is to provide a detailed account of each individual’s experience. They explained that “IPA studies usually have a small number of participants and the aim is to reveal something of the experience of each of those individuals. As part of this, the study explored in detail the similarities and differences between each case”
Smith and Osborn (2008) further explained that IPA uses small sample sizes because the aim is to “say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of a particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims” (p. 55). Due to the small sample size the results may not be generalizable to all international school and all locations.

Winkelman (1994) noted that a range of factors including prior experience with foreign cultures, individual psychological characteristics, and the degree of change from one’s home culture may provoke culture shock. Limitations to this study included differences in the prior experience of participants working overseas and exposure to the new culture. The identification of a purely homogeneous sample based on prior experiences as an expatriate teacher was not possible. Participants who had more experience living and working as an expatriate, more experience at various international schools, and those with strong ability in the local language would have had a different experience than those with limited experience or exposure to the local language.

Purposeful snowball sampling was utilized for the participant selection of this study. Participants were identified through personal contacts, referrals, and professional associations such as those working in International Baccalaureate schools, and participation in this study was completely voluntary. As such, another limitation to this study was that those who have had negative experiences working as expatriate international school teachers may have been interested in sharing their experiences.

One assumption for this study was that participants would report on their collective experiences of working in international schools. As some participants had worked in various countries at various schools, it was assumed that they would report on their experiences as a whole, instead of on the experiences at their current international school. A second assumption of this study was that all participants had enough work experience to describe morale at the
international schools where they had worked. To ensure participants possessed this understanding, participants were provided with a definition of morale as described in this study.

**Significance**

Many educators who teach in international schools live and work in foreign countries. While this lifestyle offers many benefits, such as exposure to a new country, free housing, and job security (International School Services, n.d.), it also presents challenges. Unfamiliarity with the language, and differences in culture, weather, climate, cleanliness, health care, social norms, food, and the possible feeling of exclusion by the local residents are causes of stress and anxiety for expatriates. Staff morale and school culture can be profoundly affected by the manner in which educational leaders provide both professional and emotional support for their staff.

By identifying the factors that affect staff morale and culture within international schools, the findings from this study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding staff morale and teacher job satisfaction. By identifying and understanding the factors that affect staff morale and job satisfaction within international schools, it is possible for school administrators to develop plans and implement school improvements. The way school leaders interact with all community members has an effect on staff morale and school culture. The provision of professional support, as well as emotional support, can affect not only morale, but also the retention of expatriate staff.

According to Ingersoll (2012), up to 50% of American teachers entering the profession will leave within the first five years. Since many of these novice teachers quit before becoming expert professionals, these attrition rates likely do students and schools a disservice. Through the application of Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory, it may be possible to determine those factors that would support novice teachers early in their careers. In the United States, according to Noddings (2014), one source of professional dissatisfaction for experienced, dedicated teachers
is that they do not feel trusted to “choose curriculum content or instructional methods” (p. 15). He further noted that when teachers do not feel trusted or respected, they find it difficult to maintain morale.

While these statistics provided by Ingersoll (2012) and Noddings (2014) were not gathered from an international school setting, they highlight a need to determine the types of support that teachers require. The loss of veteran teachers who have the ability to train new staff, and the potential to become future official and unofficial school leaders, likely impedes the growth of the school. As this study aims to determine the factors that international school teachers feel affect staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention, the results may assist international school administrators in developing plans and bring about positive change.

In an international school setting, where two-year contracts are common (International School Services, n.d.), the possibility of significant staff turnover exists, even with strong staff morale and high job satisfaction. There is always the likelihood that expatriate staff will desire to move to a new country and a new challenge. In order to retain as many dedicated teachers as possible—teachers who have demonstrated the ability to provide support for new teachers and who could potentially become school leaders—it is critical to determine the factors that affect staff morale and job satisfaction in an international setting.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Culture Shock:* Refers to the experiences resulting from the stresses that occur due to contact with a different culture (Winkelman, 1994).

*Expatriate:* A person who leaves one’s native country to live elsewhere (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

*International Education:* The International Baccalaureate Organization (2012) defines international education as a “comprehensive approach to education that intentionally
prepares students to be active and engaged participants in an interconnected world” (IB Community Blog, 2012).

*International School:* Schools that generally follow a national or international curriculum different from the host country and which place an emphasis on international education are considered international schools (Nagrath, 2011).

*Job Satisfaction:* Refers to the level of contentment employees feel about their work, which can affect performance (Lumen Learning, n.d.).

*Lifeworld:* Refers to the world of lived experience (van Manen, 2016).

*Lived meaning:* Refers to the way that a person experiences and understands his or her world (van Manen, 2016).

*Staff Retention:* The degree to which the current employees of a business remain with the company over a given time period (Businessdictionary.com, 2017).

*Staff Turnover:* The number or percentage of workers who leave an organization and are replaced by new employees (Mayhew, n.d.).

*Teacher Attrition:* Teacher attrition refers to the proportion of teachers who leave the profession in a given school year (UNESCO, 2018).

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that contribute to high and low staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention in international schools. As staff turnover is costly for international schools (Guin, 2004; Norton, 1999), determining the factors that international school teachers felt affect staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention may allow school administrators to develop plans to lower staff turnover in their schools. Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory assisted this researcher in identifying the factors international teachers find motivating, and the application of Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy and culture shock theory
(Winkelman, 1994) assisted in the researcher’s understanding how the expatriate experience affects morale and job satisfaction. Through the utilization of semistructured interviews with expatriate international school teachers, the factors international teachers felt affected staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention in international schools, were investigated through this qualitative, phenomenological study.

Through his two-factor theory regarding workplace satisfaction, Herzberg (2017) proposed that in the workplace certain factors, which he called motivators, provide a stimulus for workers, while other factors, which he called hygiene factors, prevent dissatisfaction. The literature review in chapter 2 will highlight prior research on factors that affect staff morale and job satisfaction based on Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory combined with Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy and culture shock theory. The methodology for this phenomenological study will be outlined in chapter 3 along with the questions formulated for the semistructured interviews. In chapter 4 the findings of this study will be described followed by the conclusion presented in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The main objective of this study was to determine the factors that attribute to high and low staff morale and influence teacher job satisfaction within international schools. The existing research on staff morale, teacher satisfaction, and teacher retention identify the main variables that have a profound effect on these topics. Although the teaching profession is similar among most public and private schools in many countries, the experience of teaching in a foreign country brings different challenges (Moran, 2013). This literature review will provide a basis from which to begin looking at teacher job satisfaction and morale of teachers who work in a country other than their own.

Living and working in a foreign country as an expatriate likely presents challenges for teachers. By reviewing the existing literature on culture shock theory, a primary goal is to determine the effects moving to a foreign country can have on a teacher. Brown and Holloway (2008) explained that while there is little consensus when defining what adjustment to a new culture means, awareness on the part of the institution can inform support provided.

In conducting this review of previous research, EBSCOhost’s Academic Search Complete and ERIC databases were utilized. Initially, as queries, the keywords teacher morale, school morale, and teacher job satisfaction were used. Through the literature review process, other notable keywords such as staff turnover and teacher motivation were discovered and used in database queries. While reading the previous literature and reviewing the referenced articles, various other promising books and articles were located.

Many connections have been made among teacher satisfaction, morale, attrition, and retention of teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Greenfield, 2015; Mackenzie, 2007). The factors that affect staff morale and teacher job satisfaction identified in the literature have been
categorized based on Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory, a component of this study’s theoretical framework.

Teacher Satisfaction

According to Aldridge and Fraser (2015), job satisfaction is “the positive or negative evaluative judgement that people make about their job” (p. 293). Over the years, through studies conducted in various countries, an abundance of research on teacher satisfaction has been conducted (Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2015; Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Perrachione et al. (2008) concluded that teachers who were satisfied with their jobs were more likely to remain in the profession. When participants were asked if they would leave the profession if the opportunity arose, job satisfaction was listed as a top reason why they would not. Rhodes et al. (2004) defined morale as “a state of mind determined by an individual’s anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of those needs which s/he perceives as significantly affecting his/her work situation” (p.68). Bhella’s (1982) definition included the individual’s needs being satisfied and further explained that this satisfaction is perceived to stem from the work experience.

Teacher job satisfaction, according to Aldridge and Fraser (2015), stems from a wide range of outcomes. These include job performance, enthusiasm, teacher retention, commitment, and attitudes towards work. In their study on why teachers remain in the profession, Perrachione et al. (2008) focused on two categories: satisfiers and dissatisfiers. Satisfiers are those facets that provide gratification and possibly lead to teacher retention while dissatisfiers are those facets that lower job satisfaction and have the potential to lead to teacher attrition and turnover. The factors that affect morale and job satisfaction are numerous; some are intrinsic, and some are extrinsic. These include but are not limited to the status of teachers within society, relationships with
administrators, a supportive community, and the act of working with children (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015).

**Support from the School Administration**

Support from a school’s administration is noted to have an effect on teacher job satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). Aldridge and Fraser (2015) explained in their study that one strategy to improve job satisfaction would be to maximize principal support. They described that “the extent to which school principals are approachable and supportive contributes directly and indirectly to teachers’ self-efficacy and job satisfaction” (p. 302). Participants in Rhodes et al.’s (2004) survey on teacher satisfaction expressed that they found effective support for teachers from managers to be deeply satisfying. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) also noted supportive school leadership to be predictive of teacher job satisfaction. Aldridge and Fraser (2015) described that one of the most interesting findings from their study was “the extent to which school principals are approachable and supportive contributes both directly and indirectly to teacher’s self-efficacy and job satisfaction” (p. 302). They further explained that findings from their research support previous research that describes the positive relationship between leadership style and teacher job satisfaction.

**A Supportive and Collegial Community**

Another factor that has an effect on teacher job satisfaction is a supportive and collegial community. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) noted that supportive school environments have a positive effect on teachers. They explained that “positive social relations with parents, colleagues, and the school leadership are also predictive of teachers’ job satisfaction” (p. 182). A source of enjoyment and satisfaction for teachers, they expressed, was the opportunity to cooperate with other teachers and work in collaborative teams. Woods and Weasmer (2004)
noted that this sense of collegiality, which can involve volunteering to work with new teachers, sharing leadership, and collaborating with other teachers, promotes teacher satisfaction.

In their study on valuing and supporting teachers, Rhodes et al. (2004) surveyed teachers on their job satisfaction. Participants were asked to place importance on 40 facets of possible job satisfaction. The results of their survey showed that many teachers found the friendliness of staff, working with others to achieve shared goals, and sharing work experiences with one another as deeply satisfying. Aldridge and Fraser (2015) expressed similar results. They stated that “creating a supportive community in which teachers can work and share ideas and practices benefits teachers in terms of job satisfaction” (p. 302). This affiliation, which allows teachers to receive assistance, advice, encouragement, and acceptance by colleagues, has a significant influence on job satisfaction.

**Working with Students**

Some studies have noted that working with students has an impact on teacher job satisfaction (Perrachione et al., 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Through their study on teacher job satisfaction, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) found that the act of working with students influenced job satisfaction. They described that participants in their study “emphasized the enjoyment of teaching and working with children, and that it was a meaningful job” (p. 183). Perrachione et al. (2008) noted similar findings. Through their survey on teacher perceptions of their job satisfaction, participants were asked to identify the number one reason they attribute to their job satisfaction. Working with students was the most common answer.

Job satisfaction refers to the positive or negative feelings a person has towards their job. It has been noted that a wide range of factors affect teacher job satisfaction. Support from the school administration, a supportive and collegial community, and working with students have
been noted to directly impact teacher job satisfaction. Previous research has indicated that high job satisfaction has a positive impact on teachers remaining in the teaching profession.

**Staff Morale**

Morale, according to Rhodes et al. (2004) “is related to an individual’s pursuit of goals required for the realization of self-concept” (p. 68). Previous research on staff morale has covered a wide range of problems and questions. Most of the research on teacher morale has focused on the factors that contribute to, or impact, staff morale (Lambersky, 2016; Mackenzie, 2007). Specific studies have investigated the relationship between leadership style and staff morale, as well as methods of valuing and supporting teachers in an effort to raise staff morale (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Bhella, 1982; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). Continuity in a school's staff has been considered a contributing factor to strong morale (Noddings, 2014). Bhella (1982) found that student achievement increased when working with teachers with high morale, and achievement decreased under teachers with low morale. Mackenzie (2007) explained that teachers feel good about themselves, their colleagues, and their work when morale is high and the environment healthy. This type of healthy environment, she continued, has an impact on student morale and achievement. Baylor and Ritchie (2002) summed up the significant effect that staff morale has on a school by explaining that “teacher morale influences all aspects of the teaching and learning environment within the school setting” (p. 410). They further explained that teacher morale affects the amount of positive difference a teacher can make in the school environment.

**Impact of Leadership on Staff Morale**

The way in which school administrators lead has an effect on staff morale. In his study on principals’ impact on teacher morale, Lambersky (2016) focused his research on the effect principals have on teacher emotions. He observed various behaviors on the part of the principal
that impacted staff morale. One behavior he noted was the principal keeping order within the school. Participants in the study expressed that the task of keeping order was “critical to the smooth functioning of the school—and if the task was unfulfilled, the morale of these teachers suffered” (Lambersky, 2016, p. 388). Support with student discipline, according to participants, had a positive effect on staff morale. Principal presence is another behavior that contributes to higher staff morale noted by Lambersky (2016). According to his study, the way in which principals maintained a presence, and made themselves visible in the school, had an effect on morale.

Supportive Administration

Supportive leadership is attributed as leading to higher staff morale. In her study on teacher morale, Mackenzie (2007) invited participants to provide their own suggestions of ways of improving morale. Of the 101 participants, 36 suggested that supportive leadership “was the key to improving staff morale” (p. 99). Participants in her study suggested that school administration had a major effect on morale. One participant expressed that “teacher morale is a by-product of visible, demonstrated support and respect from those who administer the system” (p. 95). Lambersky (2016) found that support for teacher initiative had a positive effect on morale. Participants in his study described how support for, or interest in a teacher’s initiative or classroom practice positively affected staff morale. Participants also expressed that when principal behavior was perceived as unsupportive, morale was negatively affected.

Respecting and Valuing Teachers

Noddings (2014) noted the need for respect and trust from a school’s administration. She explained that maintaining high morale for teachers is difficult when they feel “neither respected or trusted” (p. 15). Participants in Lambersky’s (2016) study explained that when principals demonstrated respect for teacher professional abilities, morale was supported. 18 out of the 20
participants in his study expressed that professional respect from their principal was very important to them. Strasser (2014) further supported this need for professional respect. One principal in her article stated, “The teachers have to know that they’re my number one” (p. 13). She further described that by trusting and empowering teachers, teacher morale is higher.

Staff morale in a school has a significant effect on teaching, learning, school environment, and achievement. Schools with high teacher morale tend to have higher student achievement. The manner in which a school’s leadership administers the school has an effect on staff morale. School leadership involvement on various levels including student discipline, presence, and simply keeping order, has an effect on staff morale. Support for teachers by demonstrating an interest in teaching practice and classroom initiatives has been noted as positively influencing morale. The feeling of respect from leadership and the development of a trusting relationship has also been noted as contributing to teacher morale.

**Teacher Retention and Attrition**

Although the ideas of teacher attrition and teacher turnover may seem similar, there are distinct differences. Staff attrition refers to the number of teachers who decide to leave the profession every year (UNESCO, 2018). Teacher turnover refers to the number of teachers who leave a school and need to be replaced by new employees (Mayhew, n.d.). Previous research has focused on identifying the factors that lead to attrition and turnover.

Many studies on teacher attrition have made links to teacher retention (Mancuso et al., 2010; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). In an effort to retain teachers, and in turn lower attrition rates, many studies have focused on the factors that contribute to teacher retention. Specific areas of focus in the research on teacher retention has included school climate, teacher commitment, and teacher motivation (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Tentama & Pranungsari, 2016). One study by Perrachione et al. (2008) focused on the specific reasons
teachers remain in the teaching profession as opposed to simply identifying the reasons people leave the profession. Through the identification of the intrinsic and extrinsic variables that affect retention, the goal was to identify what can be done to proactively retain teachers.

In their study on teacher recruitment and retention, Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) identified two policies that can promote teacher retention. The first are compensation policies. These policies deal with teacher salaries in comparison to other occupations. The authors noted in their study that higher salaries were linked to lower teacher attrition. Guarino et al. (2006) also reported that dissatisfaction with salary was associated with decreased commitment to teaching. The second set of policies identified with teacher retention are in-service policies. The authors noted that in-service programs such as mentoring and induction programs had a positive impact on teacher retention. Guarino et al. (2006) further explained that schools that allow teacher autonomy and administrative support demonstrated lower attrition rates.

Some studies indicate that a high staff turnover can negatively affect the quality of education (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Mancuso et al., 2010). Noddings (2014) described that student academic achievement can be strengthened through low staff turnover. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) identified different results and explained that in some ways, turnover may actually be beneficial. They noted that more effective teachers are more likely to remain while less effective teachers are more likely to leave a school. They explained that this turnover can benefit a school when leaving teachers are replaced by more effective teachers.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this interpretive phenomenological study is derived from two theories that explain human motivation and two theories that describe the adjustment to a new culture. The two theories that have been used in this study to describe teacher job
satisfaction and staff morale are Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy of needs and Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory. The two theories that describe adjustment to a new culture are culture shock theory and acculturation theory.

Maslow’s (2017) hierarchy divides basic human needs into five levels. Only when the most basic human needs are met, according to this theory, can people begin to focus on fulfilling their potential. Whitaker, Whitaker, and Lumpa (2009) explained that without fulfilling the most basic needs outlined by this theory, an individual is not likely to have positive morale. The current research focuses on the factors that fulfill, or do not fulfill, these needs for most teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008; Rhodes et al., 2004). Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory focuses on the occupational factors that provide individuals with satisfaction, and those they find dissatisfying. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that one of the challenges facing educational leaders with regard to staff morale is a lack of authority over factors such as salary and benefits. They further explained that Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory describes the motivational factors an educational leader can have some control over.

Culture shock theory and acculturation theory describe the experiences people face when adjusting to a new culture. As expatriate teachers live and work in locations outside of their native country, they face experiences they may not face in their home countries. When moving into a new culture, people can face many challenges including strain and anxiety due to culture shock (Oberg, 1960). A person’s basic needs may not be satisfied when confronted with culture shock. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that understanding where teachers are on Maslow’s hierarchy can assist leaders in providing support that improves motivation.

**Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory**

In order to synthesize the results of the various studies on teacher job satisfaction and morale, the contributing factors identified in the research have been categorized based on
Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation, a component of this study’s theoretical framework. According to Luthans (2011), Herzberg’s study attempted to identify the factors that motivate employees. Through his study, Herzberg (2017) asked two questions. The first question focused on what made an employee feel particularly good about their job, and the second focused on what made the employee feel exceptionally bad about their job. Essentially the questions examined what motivated and did not motivate employees in regard to their work or employment. These factors, which were originally called good feelings and bad feelings, eventually became known as motivators and hygiene factors (Luthans, 2011). Motivators are satisfying aspects of one’s job, while hygiene factors are measures put in place to prevent employee dissatisfaction. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that these factors are often referred to as dissatisfiers because they can become demotivating for people if they do not seem adequate. They continued by explaining that even if these benefits are perceived as minimally satisfactory, the probability of long-term incentive is low.

**Hygiene factors—based on Herzberg’s theory.** In his two-factor theory of motivation, Herzberg (2017) identified various factors which are considered job dissatisfiers. According to Luthans (2011), they have been labelled as hygiene factors, as they are often seen as preventive measures—those that can be implemented in an effort to prevent dissatisfaction. From the literature available on teacher job satisfaction, many such hygiene factors have been identified, including supervision and school leadership, relationship with colleagues and collegiality, salary, and workload (Luthans, 2011; Mackenzie, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

**Supervision and school leadership.** Many studies have been conducted on the effect supervision and school leadership can have on teacher job satisfaction (Bhella, 1982; Downing, 2016; Gungor, 2016). It was noted in many studies that the relationship between teachers and administrators, and the leadership style followed by the administrator, deeply affected job
satisfaction. For instance, in their study on valuing and supporting teachers, Rhodes et al. (2004) reported that 73% of those surveyed found leadership support as deeply satisfying. Within the same study, it was reported that poor working relationships with managers was in the top 20 factors that contribute to teachers deciding to leave the teaching profession. Rhodes et al. (2004) went as far as to state:

Those with influence over the circumstances of teaching in schools, such as LEAs (local education authority—or school board) and school leadership teams, hold the possibility of enhancing the quality of teachers’ professional lives, fostering increased job commitment and perhaps causing teachers to decide that they want to stay in the profession. (p.76)

Aldridge and Fraser (2015) also noted that the approachability and supportiveness of school leadership both directly and indirectly contributed to teacher job satisfaction. As these studies indicate, school leadership has the ability to positively affect job satisfaction; however, it could have the opposite effect as well. Mackenzie (2007), explained that if high morale can be achieved through effective leadership, then it is also likely that poor morale can be a byproduct of poor leadership.

In Odland and Ruzicka’s (2009) study on teacher turnover in international schools, their survey asked teachers to indicate the variables that influenced their decision to leave the school after their first contract. The researchers explained that of the top five factors that were identified by participants as the most important when considering whether to remain at a school, three fell into the same causal category, administrative leadership. These were communication with senior management, support from the principal, and teacher involvement in decision-making. Aside from supervision and school leadership, positive working relationships with colleagues also likely have an impact on satisfaction.
**Relationships with colleagues and collegiality.** Through the available literature, relationships with colleagues and collegiality have also been identified as factors impacting job satisfaction. An example was identified by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015). Through their study on job satisfaction in the teaching profession, cooperation and teamwork were identified as sources of gratification and job satisfaction. One participant in this study noted that as all the teachers in the team have different strengths, collectively, their ability to meet the diverse needs of their students is increased. This collegiality, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) further explained, allowed teachers to learn from each other, which was seen by many teachers as enjoyable and satisfying in the workplace.

Noddings (2014) emphasized the need for collegiality or, more specifically, a common sense of purpose within the school. She explained that “A school is not just a center for the production of learning. It is a place to which people become attached” (p. 16). This was confirmed by Rhodes et al. (2004) in their study. Through their survey, 97% of those who responded to this question found the friendliness of staff to be deeply satisfying. Positive working relationships with managers and other staff were also listed in the top ten factors likely to lead to retention in the teaching profession. Luthans (2011) noted that although an effective team is not essential to job satisfaction in the workplace, friendly and cooperative coworkers provide advice, comfort, and support. Aldridge and Fraser (2015) also reported that job satisfaction was indirectly influenced by affiliation with colleagues. Affiliation, they explained, is the amount of assistance and encouragement teachers can receive from colleagues. In their book on motivating and inspiring teachers, Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that within a teaching staff, the concept of fitting in is critical. They continued by saying that providing as many opportunities as possible for staff to interact with positive staff members can help to spread a productive attitude around a school (Whitaker et al., 2009).
**Salary and compensation.** According to the literature, salary can also have an effect on job satisfaction, both positive and negative. Luthans (2011) noted that in an organization, an employee’s salary is often perceived as a reflection of how much the employee’s contribution is valued by the management. While benefits are also viewed as important, their influence over job satisfaction is lower as their monetary value can be difficult to determine. It could be difficult to determine, for example, how much a yearly health club membership is worth. In Mackenzie’s (2007) study on teacher morale, salary was isolated as a major cause for poor morale in teachers. According to her study, 88% of the participants attributed salary as influencing poor morale. Rhodes et al.’s (2004) study also noted that the salary of teachers reflected the perceived value society places on teachers. This also contributes to the perceived low status of the teaching profession. In their study on teacher turnover in international schools, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) also found that salary was a contributing factor to teacher turnover.

Through their research into valuing and supporting teachers, Rhodes et al. (2004) found that of the participants who replied to questions about salary, 67% expressed compensation to be deeply dissatisfying. While this study has shown that salary can have a direct impact on satisfaction, Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that it may not have a lasting impact on motivation:

If your salary is at least at an adequate level, how much harder would you work next year if your salary were going to be doubled? Maybe a little bit more the first day, week, or even month, but then you would settle into your previous level of performance. (p. 9)

While salary increases provide satisfaction for people, a higher salary does not equal heightened productivity and motivation.

**Workload.** Workload is another hygiene factor that can influence teacher job satisfaction and morale. Mackenzie (2007) claimed that teacher workload has been a problem for the past
twenty years. Reasons given for this increase in workload include increased expectations, constant change and innovation, added administrative work, and increased accountability. In her study, teachers were given the opportunity to provide suggestions to improve teacher morale. Of the suggestions made, workload and reduced stress were the most common.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) found that workload and time pressure were main contributors to the challenges and stresses experienced in the teaching profession. They noted that working days can be frenetic with little time for rest, and that too many tasks needed to be completed with not enough time. They also described that interruptions during times of needed concentration were frequent. In addition to the planning and preparation of teaching, attending meetings, communication with parents, communication with other specialists, and keeping records of meetings and communications all add to the time pressure. One respondent in Mackenzie’s (2007) study explained that major causes of fading teacher morale are over-assessment, misguided accountability, and an endless amount of unneeded paperwork. Mackenzie (2007) suggested that the problem may not necessarily be with the act of teaching, but with managing the increased accountability and transparency.

In their study on valuing and supporting teachers, Rhodes et al. (2004) noted that a primary dissatisfying facet of being a teacher was the workload. Of the respondents who answered this question, 96% agreed that they find the workload deeply dissatisfying. The workload was also noted as the second overall factor that would lead to a teacher leaving the profession. The authors suggested that these results should provoke administrators and leadership teams to consider support for teachers and investigate methods in which teachers can better manage their workloads.

While the measures outlined here, according to Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory, attempt to prevent employee dissatisfaction, a second set of measures, he explained, attempts to
provide motivation for employees. These motivators, as Herzberg called them, are the satisfying aspects of one’s job. Herzberg’s concept of motivators, according to Luthans (2011), provided a different perspective to perplexed managers of unmotivated employees receiving higher pay packages and fringe benefits. Up until then, he explained, most managers focused solely on hygiene factors and had not considered intrinsic motivators.

Motivators—based on Herzberg’s theory. Herzberg (2017) identified various factors in his two-factor theory of motivation that are considered job satisfiers. This set, known as motivators, contributes to job satisfaction (Gardner, 1977). Luthans (2011) explained that once the hygiene factors have been met, “only a challenging job that has the opportunities for achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and growth will motivate personnel” (p. 166). From the literature available on teacher job satisfaction, many such motivating factors have been identified. These factors include achievement, shared leadership, recognition, advancement, professional growth, and the work itself (Luthans, 2011; Mackenzie, 2007; Rhodes et al., 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Whitaker et al., 2009).

Achievement and efficacy. Achievement, according to Luthans (2011), is a secondary motive, which are those motives that are learned as opposed to being innate. Secondary motives are intrinsic by nature and they are usually associated with a task or a job. Examples from the author include outperforming competitors, surpassing a goal, solving a problem, or developing a better method of doing something. As a teacher this could be raising achievement scores, developing a reading program, or simply inspiring a group of students to write.

Efficacy is defined as the ability or power to produce an effect (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Teacher efficacy, or the belief that teachers can make a difference in students’ lives, likely provides motivation for teachers. In their study on what teachers remain in the profession, Perrachione et al. (2008) surveyed teachers about their level of job satisfaction. One of the top
reasons given from those who indicated they were very satisfied was teaching efficacy. One participant responded by stating that although they felt teaching has its challenges, knowing that they had made a difference for at least one child, they felt good about their job. The number one reason teachers with over five years of experience gave for remaining in the profession was teacher efficacy. Of the participants who indicated they would likely remain in the teaching profession, teacher efficacy was also a top reason provided. One participant explained that they would remain in the profession as long as they can make a difference in children’s lives.

*Shared leadership and decision making.* Shared leadership and involvement, according to studies, are motivating factors for teachers (Mancuso et al., 2010; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). In their study on teacher turnover in international schools, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) found teacher involvement to be a major factor in teachers departing international schools. Participants in their study noted that a lack of faculty involvement in schoolwide decision-making was influential in decisions to seek employment elsewhere. Mancuso et al. (2010) found in their study on teacher retention in international schools that the perception of faculty influence had an impact on teacher retention. Through their study they sought to determine the impact teacher perception of shared decision-making had on retention. The amount that school administrators solicited and valued teacher input for decision-making was also included in this study. Mancuso et al. found the perception of shared leadership, or of staff involvement in decision making, to be significant in staff decisions to remain at, or leave, their school.

Rhodes et al. (2004) noted similar results from their study. Of the participants who responded to their question regarding decision making, the authors noted that 52% found participation in school decision making to be deeply satisfying. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that in addition to providing direction for the school, leadership teams promote collaboration among the staff. They recommend employing various levels of teams in order to promote
collaboration. Examples of the types of teams include principal advisory teams, informal groups, specific-purpose teams, and grade-level teams.

**Recognition.** According to Whitaker et al. (2009), recognition is another intrinsic motivator for teachers. Acknowledgment, praise, and positive reinforcement, they explained, are ways in which educational leaders can provide recognition. Rhodes et al. (2004) found that 82 of the 129 participants who responded to their question on recognition of their efforts agreed that they found being recognized for their effort to be deeply satisfying. One hundred and one participants took part in Mackenzie’s (2007) study on teacher morale. They were provided with the opportunity to offer suggestions for improving morale, and 21 of these participants suggested that providing added recognition to individuals/groups for their efforts would raise teacher morale in their schools. Included in the concept of recognition is that of feeling valued within the school. Recognition by the school administration for the contributions a teacher makes can demonstrate to an educator that they are valued. Rhodes et al. (2001) found that of the 96 participants who answered this question, 91% agreed that it is deeply satisfying when the school values contributions made by its members.

**The work itself.** As Perrachione et al. (2008) noted, many motivators for teachers are intrinsic by nature. One of the prime motivators for teachers, according to this study, is the work itself. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) noted that although all the teachers who participated in this study claimed to experience a high degree of stress and exhaustion, they also reported high job satisfaction. According to reports from these teachers, the main sources of their job satisfaction stemmed from the work itself. According to accounts from participants in their study, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) reported that teachers’ main sources of job satisfaction were the actual process of teaching, working with children, and watching their students learning and progressing. Through their research, Rhodes et al. (2004) found similar results. In their study they ranked the
factors that teachers felt would lead to them remaining in the profession for the next five years. The desire to help children learn was third, behind higher pay and feeling valued by stakeholders.

In their study on the reasons teachers remain in the teaching profession, Perrachione et al. (2008) also found the work itself to be a prime factor. Participants in their study were asked how satisfied they were with teaching as a profession and why. Of those who stated they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied, the top reason given for their satisfaction was working with students. One participant stated, “Teaching has its challenges, but I feel good almost every day knowing I’ve made a difference to at least one child” (Perrachione et al., 2008, p. 31). When participants were asked to identify the number one reason to which they attribute their job satisfaction, working with children was in the top six responses provided. One respondent claimed that the number one reason for job satisfaction was “My own personal enjoyment in working with children” (p. 32). Perrachione et al. (2008) also asked participants if they would leave the teaching profession for another occupation if the opportunity arose. Of those who claimed they certainly would not, or probably would not, working with children was listed as a primary reason.

Advancement. Career advancement within a school is likely related to recognition for efforts. Previous research has indicated that some teachers are motivated by the opportunity for career advancement, or would remain at the school if advancement opportunities were presented (Mancuso et al., 2010). Rhodes et al. (2004) even noted that career advancement opportunity “was placed in the highest ten rankings of factors most likely to lead to teacher retention” (p. 74). In their study on teacher turnover in international schools, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) explained that one of the main reasons respondents gave for joining and remaining in an international
school was career advancement. Teachers also indicated that opportunities at other schools were influential in some teachers deciding to leave their schools.

**Professional growth.** As another intrinsic motivator, opportunities for professional growth have been attributed to teacher job satisfaction and morale. In her study on teacher morale, Mackenzie (2007) found that a high percentage of teachers did not feel that their professional development needs were being met. According to the study, more than half of the participants identified a connection between staff morale and access to relevant professional development opportunities. The author also suggested that further research be conducted on the mismatch between the perceived professional development needs by teachers and the actual opportunities offered to them.

The qualitative study at hand examines the factors expatriate teachers feel affect staff morale and teacher job satisfaction in international schools. The theories that guide this study are based on work motivation, human needs, and acculturation. These theories provide a framework for school administrators as they provide support for staff based on cultural adjustment and work motivation.

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

Whitaker et al. (2009) used Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy to explain the importance of how these factors work together to shape job satisfaction and staff morale. According to the hierarchy, there are five basic groups of human needs. They are: (McLeod, 2017)

1. Physiological needs—basics of food, water and shelter.
2. Safety needs—physical, emotional, and financial safety.
3. Social needs—belonging, groups, friendship.
4. Esteem needs—respect and appreciation.
5. Self-actualization needs—maximizing one’s potential.
The hierarchal theory states that only when the basic needs are met can a person work toward self-actualization. Whitaker et al. (2009) described that unless the physiological, safety, and social needs are met, individual teachers are likely to have low morale. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained Maslow’s hierarchy in relation to staff morale. They described that if the low-level physiological, safety, and social needs are not satisfied, a person is not likely to have positive morale. They further explained that only when the basic needs are satisfied can people shift their focus to working toward their full potential.

**Culture Shock and Acculturation**

When international teachers leave their home countries to accept posts in foreign countries, they may come face to face with many challenges. These challenges can include distance from friends and loved ones, language barriers, culture shock, lack of a support network, and a lack of a social network. Due to regional considerations, there can also be challenges with safety, security, and healthcare.

**Culture shock.** As international teachers move to other countries for work opportunities, one theory that attempts to explain their experience is *culture shock theory*. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock is caused by “the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 142). Extensive implications, such as a feeling of loss, confusion, and helplessness, can result from the anxiety of not only moving into a new country and culture, but also from leaving a familiar one. Rhinesmith (as cited in Winkelman, 1994) explained that “culture shock derives from both the challenge of new cultural surroundings and from the loss of a familiar cultural environment” (p. 122). During the culture shock process, therefore, two things are happening at once that connects the new environment and the old one.
Brown and Holloway (2008) described culture shock as anxiety from “losing the familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse, and their substitution by other cues that are strange” (p. 34). The four stages of culture shock are: (Winkelman, 1994, p. 122)

1. The honeymoon or tourist phase.
2. The crises or cultural shock phase.
3. The adjustment, reorientation, and gradual recovery phase.
4. The adaptation, resolution, or acculturation phase.

Although it is not possible to eliminate the symptoms of culture shock, Torbiorn (1994) explained that having an awareness of the difficult adjustment period can inform the support provided by the institution.

**Acculturation.** Culture, according to Oxford Dictionaries (2018), refers to the customs, social behaviors, and ideas held by a particular people or culture. Acculturation is a process where people change to become more like people from a different culture (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). Walker and Barnett (2007) further defined acculturation as “the process of learning and incorporating the values, beliefs, language, customs, and mannerisms of the new country immigrants and their families are living in, including behaviors that affect health such as dietary habits, activity levels, and substance use” (p. 519). Exposure to a new culture can be startling for some people as they realize that their own beliefs about the world are not shared by every culture.

Ward (2001) described three primary areas in human life that change through the process of acculturation, and he called them the ABCs of acculturation: the affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of the process. The affective aspects highlight the emotional aspects of acculturation and focus on psychological well-being. Sam and Berry (2010) explained that through acculturation, people are exposed to a series of life events that provoke stress reactions.
This acculturative stress, they continue, occurs when a person is faced with challenges they deem as problematic because they are not able to deal with them by simply changing their behavior.

The behavioral aspect of acculturation deals with strategies people going through the acculturation process learn in order to handle the changes. Sam and Berry (2010) explained that a person can be confronted with challenges in handling everyday social situations when they lack the requisite skills to engage with the new culture. Learned behavior, according to the authors, include intercommunication skills, social norms, and language skills.

The cognitive aspect of the ABCs of acculturation deals with how people see themselves and their place within the new culture. Sam and Berry (2010) explained that the cognitive aspects focus on how people define their identity within the society they are adjusting into. They further explained that when entering an acculturation situation, people are posed with two questions: “Who am I?” and “To which group do I belong?” (p. 475). Tajfel and Turner (1986) explained that humans tend to put themselves into groups; that in order to develop a sense of well-being, people need to belong to a group. Through this grouping, people are then able to compare their group to other groups.

Berry (2005) proposed a two-dimensional model for explaining acculturation. The two dimensions of the model, displayed in Table 1, are used to analyze a person’s acculturation. The first dimension, which Berry (1997) called cultural maintenance, is the degree to which a person preserves their home culture. The second is the degree to which a person is willing to learn and adopt a new culture. Berry (1997) called this contact and participation. When the issues of cultural maintenance and contact and participation are considered simultaneously, according to Berry (1997), a framework is generated that describes four acculturation strategies.
Table 1

*Berry’s Model of Acculturation Adapted from Berry, J. W. (2005)*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification with heritage culture HIGH</th>
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<td>Identification with host culture HIGH</td>
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<td>Identification with host culture LOW</td>
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<td>Marginalization</td>
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The first strategy is assimilation, and it occurs when a person makes identifying with the new culture a priority over preserving their home culture (Truong, 2016). Contrasting this idea of assimilation is the strategy called separation. Separation, according to Berry (1997), occurs when a person values holding on to their home culture more than interacting with the new culture. The third strategy occurs when a person has an interest in maintaining their home culture while “seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network” (Berry, 1997, p. 9). The fourth strategy is known as marginalization. Marginalization occurs when a person identifies neither with their home culture, nor with the new culture (Truong, 2016).

**Conclusion**

According to previous studies, there are many factors that contribute to staff morale and teacher job satisfaction. They include but are not limited to workload, relationships with the leadership team, that team’s leadership style, relationships with colleagues, compensation, and the status of teaching in society (Mackenzie, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2004). These factors can positively or negatively impact staff attrition and turnover, either by increasing staff turnover, or
by retaining teachers. Mancuso et al. (2010) noted that school performance and the quality of education is disrupted by high turnover.

Previous research on teacher attrition and turnover indicates various ways this issue can be addressed, and much is consistent with the results on morale and job satisfaction. Many of the factors that contribute to staff morale and job satisfaction and tend to be intrinsic by nature. The research shows that there is a need for teachers to feel valued. It shows that a common purpose within each school is necessary (Noddings, 2014). Teachers want to feel as though they have a say in the decision-making processes within their schools (Perrachione et al., 2008), and they need to feel recognized for their work (Mackenzie, 2007).

Culture shock and acculturation theory attempt to explain the process people go through when immersed into a new and unfamiliar culture. According to culture shock theory, people go through four phases, beginning with the honeymoon phase and moving toward acculturation. According to Rhinesmith (as cited in Winkelman, 1994), the anxiety one experiences from not only moving into a new culture but also from losing a familiar one can generate feelings of loss, confusion, and helplessness. Acculturation is the process wherein people change to become more like people from a different culture. According to this theory, the degree of acculturation a person can achieve depends on their level of identification with their home culture and the new culture.

Maslow’s hierarchy (2013) explains that people are motivated to address certain needs and that some needs take priority over others. This model of human motivation is divided into five levels and states that only when the basic needs are met can a person work toward self-actualization. Whitaker et al. (2009) described that unless the physiological, safety, and social needs are met, individual teachers are likely to have low morale. While there is ample research available on staff morale and teacher job satisfaction, little research could be found regarding the
experience of expatriate teachers working in international schools. Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory, Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy, and culture shock theory (Winkelman, 1994) were utilized to determine the factors that contribute to staff morale and job satisfaction for expatriate teachers working in international schools.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study explored the factors that affect expatriate staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools. Staff morale and job satisfaction likely affect staff retention (Perrachione et al., 2008). Based on the nature of international education, and the motives teachers have for entering international teaching, high staff turnover is experienced by many international schools. According to Chandler (2010), “international schools have been characterized as demonstrating ‘relatively high’ staff turnover” (p. 214). Staff turnover can be financially costly for schools and Guin (2004) claimed that estimates of teacher replacement costs can reach 150% of a teacher’s salary. High staff retention provides consistency, helps to portray a positive picture of the school within the eyes of the community, and can benefit the school financially (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Phenomenological research attempts to describe the lived experience several individuals have with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Lived experience, according to Chandler and Munday (2011) refers to personal knowledge based on first-hand experience in everyday events. Merriam (2009) explained that phenomenology focuses on the experience itself and how this experience is transformed in consciousness, or how people understand their experiences. The study of the conscious experience, as described by Smith (2013), involves investigating the experience from the first-person point of view. Van Manen (2016) further described phenomenology “as the study of the lifeworld—the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively” (p. 9). The goal, he explained, is to understand the nature of our lived experiences. An interpretive approach was selected for this study as it allows the researcher to examine how people make sense of their life experiences. Johnson and Christensen (2014) described that phenomenologists generally assume that in the human experience there is some commonality.
Through their research, phenomenologists attempt to understand this commonality. The purpose of this study was to understand the commonality of the international teaching experience.

**Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as a Method**

To gain an understanding of the lived experience of expatriate teachers working in international schools, this study employed the method of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA research, according to Smith et al. (2009), seeks not only to understand individual experiences, but also how individuals perceive their experiences. The terms *lifeworld* and *lived meaning* are commonly used in phenomenology (van Manen, 2016). Lifeworld, according to van Manen (2016), refers to the world of lived experience, and lived meaning refers to “the way that a person experiences and understands his or her world as real and meaningful” (p. 183). Through the examination of the participants’ lifeworld, IPA aims to explore how participants make sense of their social and personal worlds (Smith and Osborn, 2008).

A major influence on IPA is *ideography*, a concern with the detailed examination of a particular case (Smith et al., 2009). This commitment to the particular, they explained, functions in two ways. First, IPA places heavy emphasis on the details, and this focus on the finer details requires a thorough and systematic analysis. The second is a commitment to understanding “how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context” (Smith et al., p. 29). Through the IPA process, the researcher employs a two-stage interpretation process. Smith and Osborn (2008) explained that while participants attempt to understand their experience, “the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their world” (p. 53). This two-stage process, known as a double hermeneutic, requires the researcher to employ personal skills in a self-conscious and systematic manner.
IPA, according to Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005), is the exploration of a lived experience combined with the subjective and reflective process of interpretation. It is further explained that through the application of IPA: researchers attempt to “make sense of participants’ experiences and concerns, and to illuminate them in a way that answers a particular research question” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 22). IPA, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), “is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world” (p. 55). Smith and Osborn (2008) further explained that, as the aim of IPA is to explore the phenomenon in detail, IPA research questions are posed broadly and openly. The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do expatriate international school teachers perceive staff morale and teacher job satisfaction?
2. How does the experience of living as an expatriate affect staff morale and job satisfaction for international school teachers?

Setting

As this study was not site dependent, participants were selected from various international schools. Expatriate international school teachers located in various countries participated in this study. Through international school contacts, the researcher was able to locate interested participants from numerous schools in three different countries. As the purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of expatriate teachers and how this experience affects staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools, qualitative data from various international school locations was collected. The experiences of international teachers varied from school to school, and collecting data from teachers from a variety of schools maximized the richness of the data. As such, this study was not site dependent. When conducting
phenomenological research, data is gathered from people who have “experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61), which, for this study, was living as an expatriate and teaching in an international school.

Participants and Stakeholders

This study utilized purposive sampling, a nonrandom sampling technique, to enlist participants. According to Creswell (2014), in purposeful sampling, the researcher first specifies the characteristics of a population of interest, and then purposefully locates individuals who have those characteristics. Within the context of this study, the specified characteristic was that of having experience as an expatriate teacher in an international school. Creswell (2007) described phenomenology as a process in which the researcher “makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experience” (p. 59). As such, identifying a purposive sample of individuals who had experienced the same phenomena, living overseas and teaching in an international school, was necessary.

Smith and Osborn (2008) noted that when implementing an IPA approach, there is no right answer to questions regarding sample size. They further explained that a recent trend in IPA is the use of small sample sizes. While Smith et al. (2009) stated that there is no agreed upon sample size when implementing an IPA approach, they explained that for doctorates, a typical sample size is between four and ten interviews. Based on this guidance, eight to twelve expatriates currently teaching in international schools were sought for participation in this study. Participants were identified through personal contacts, referrals, and professional associations such as those working in International Baccalaureate schools. Purposeful sampling strategies were used and nine participants within the expatriate international school teaching community were selected. Purposeful sampling, according to Patton (2009) is the selection of rich cases that are “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the
purpose of the research” (p. 46). The specific purposeful sampling strategy that was utilized to identify the participants in this study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling involves locating a small sample of key participants who meet the criteria established for the study. Through interviewing, participants were asked to refer other participants who fit the criteria (Merriam, 2009). The process known as maximum variation sampling was implemented to capture a wide range of perspectives on staff morale and the international teaching experience. Expatriate teachers from international schools located in various countries, both male and female, teaching in both elementary and secondary schools, were sought. Selected participants were contacted by e-mail with an invitation to participate in this study (Appendix A) and a consent form (Appendix B). At this stage demographic information was gathered.

**Ethical Considerations and Participant Rights**

This study focused on the experience of living as an expatriate and working in an international school. Throughout this study, the protocols set by the University of New England’s (UNE) Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed. Three ethical considerations, based on the Belmont Report and listed in UNE’s manual, titled *The University of New England Policies, Procedures, and Guidance on Research with Human Subjects* (2010) are respect for persons, beneficence, and informed consent. Respect for persons refers to the conviction that all individuals be treated as autonomous and that people with diminished autonomy be protected. Beneficence refers to ensuring that a person’s decisions are respected and that efforts are made to secure their well-being. Informed consent means that prior to agreeing to take part in a study, all participants are fully informed about the procedures and understand possible risks (Roberts, 2010). The ethical principles of the Belmont Report and UNE’s IRB were employed by the researcher.
Respect for persons was achieved by ensuring autonomy through voluntary participation. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), the American Educational Research Association (AERA) explicitly stated that participants have the right to withdraw from a study at any time. In this study participants were regarded as self-governing and had the option of ending their participation if they wished to do so. On the informed consent form it was explicit that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at their discretion.

Beneficence was met by the researcher through the diminishing of any potential harm participants may experience. Protecting the identities of participants and ensuring confidentiality was a primary consideration in this data collection. Sieber (1992) (as cited in Roberts, 2010) described confidentiality as an agreement with participants as to what may be done with the data collected. Roberts (2010) further explained that the identities of participants must be protected, and that all data be held in confidence. In order to ensure confidentiality, prior to the interviewing process, each participant and school was assigned a pseudonym and no identifiable characteristics were disclosed. As explained by Smith et al. (2009), raw, unedited transcript data was viewed by the researcher only and all data was edited for de-identification.

All data, including audio recordings and interview transcripts, were stored on a password protected computer. All written records were stored in a secure location within the researcher’s home. At the completion of the study, all electronic files, including audio recordings, and interview transcripts were permanently deleted. All paper materials, including hand-written notes and printed transcript documents were shredded. Informed consent was obtained from each participant through the use of a consent form that included privacy protections (Appendix B). The consent for participation form provided an explanation of the study, participant rights, and disclosure of potential risks and benefits.
Data Collection

The goal of this interpretive phenomenological study was to examine the lived experience of expatriate teachers and how this experience affects staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools. Merriam (2009) explained that interviewing is necessary when researchers are unable to “observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (p. 88). As such, qualitative interviews were conducted with nine participants. The interviews were recorded, and descriptive data were collected by transcribing the audio recordings and corroborating the meaning of artifacts through the interviews. In order to ensure triangulation, participants were asked to present any artifacts they felt would help to further describe their experience as an expatriate international school teacher. During the interviews, these artifacts were discussed as separate sources of data. Artifacts provided by participants included teacher schedules, teacher appraisal forms, letters of reference, orientation slideshows, orientation schedules, and yearly calendars.

As participants were selected from a variety of locations, interviews were conducted via web-based conference software. All interviews were recorded using Zoom, an online video conferencing tool that included a recording feature. Zoom allowed for meetings to be recorded locally onto a computer and this function was utilized for all interviews. Prior to the interviews, each participant was provided with a pseudonym. In the event that a participant referred to themselves or others by their proper names, this information was edited during the data cleansing after the interview had been transcribed. All interviews were conducted in English.

The audio files from the interviews were transcribed using Rev.com, a professional transcription service. Once transcription was completed, the data were cleaned and reviewed by the researcher to ensure that no identifying information was included in the transcribed documents. Each participant was presented with a copy of their interview transcript generated
from the audio recordings for member checking. Member checks, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), involve providing participants with the transcribed interviews for review. Participants had the opportunity to make clarifications to their interview transcription.

All interview and transcription files were stored on a password-protected computer. Backup files were saved on a flash drive that was stored in a secure location at the researcher’s home. At the conclusion of this study, all interview recordings were destroyed.

Smith et al. (2009) explained that data collection methods that “invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences” (p. 56) are best suited for IPA. Interviews, they suggest, are optimal for most IPA studies. Semi-structured interviews were selected for this IPA study as they allowed for the collaborative and flexible method of communication recommended by Reid et al. (2005). This style of interview, according to Merriam (2009), is guided by issues to be explored and allows for flexibility. One method of collecting detailed accounts of personal experiences, according to van Manen (2016), is through conversations revolving around personal life stories. In line with his suggestions, participants were asked to describe specific situations or events. Example questions included:

- Can you share a time when you felt happy about your current position?
- Can you tell me about your current job satisfaction?
- Why do you think it is like this?

Van Manen (2016) noted the importance of keeping interview questions about the phenomenon open and ensuring both the interviewer and the interviewee remain focused on the topic being examined. He explained that if the interviewee feels as if he or she is also a co-investigator, they often become more invested in the research project. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher invested time to get to know the participant and develop a positive rapport. This was accomplished through the sharing of similar experiences as educators working
in foreign countries. Smith et al. (2009) explained the importance of the interviewee feeling comfortable with the interviewer and developing a sense of trust. Once rapport had been established, the first interview question was asked. Reid et al. (2005) further explained that a benefit of semi-structured interviews is that they are “easily managed; allow rapport to be developed; allow participants to think, speak, and be heard; and are well suited to in-depth and personal discussion” (p. 22). Van Manen (2016) described that these types of interviews resemble conversations between friends. Smith et al. (2009) further explained that semi-structured interviews can aid in allowing participants to speak freely and reflectively.

In order to examine how the lived experience of expatriate teachers affected staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools, the interviews followed an interview guide (Appendix C). Prior to data collection, the semi-structured interview protocol and the interview techniques were piloted to ensure effectiveness. Pilot testing, according to Creswell (2007) is the process of testing interview questions and procedures with the purpose of refining them. Interviews were piloted with teachers at the researcher’s current school. These teachers fulfilled the criteria for this study as they were expatriates working in an international school. Johnson and Christensen (2014) recommended pilot tests as they help to determine if the protocol operates properly before implementing it in the research study. Merriam (2009) further described the importance of pilot tests in trialing interview questions. She explained that through pilot tests the researcher can determine if questions require rewording, whether they yield useless data, or if additional questions should be included.

Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure reliability and validity, member checks and triangulation were implemented into this study. Triangulation, according to Merriam (2009), is probably the most well-known approach to ensuring validity in a study. Triangulation involves the researcher using
multiple sources of data to corroborate evidence (Creswell, 2007) and allows for multiple perceptions of the data in an effort to reduce misinterpretation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) further described that through the process of triangulation, meaning is clarified through the gathering of multiple perspectives. Along with the qualitative interviews, artifacts were also collected and discussed as separate sources of data. Participants were asked to share with the researcher artifacts that they felt would further describe their experience. Artifacts included teacher appraisal forms, letters of reference, teaching timetables, and orientation schedules.

**Data Analysis**

Smith et al. (2009) described IPA as characterized by a set of common processes and principles. These processes, they explained, generally move from the descriptive to the interpretive, and from the particular to the shared. The guiding principle of IPA is a commitment to developing an understanding of each participant’s point of view (Smith et al., 2009). Through the use of interpretive commentary, according to Reid et al. (2005), the aim of IPA is to allow the researcher to “develop an ‘insider’s perspective’ on the topic” (p. 22). This process, they further explain, provides a balanced analysis as it included an insider’s perspective as well as an outsider’s interpretation. Through this interpretation, the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant’s experience (Reid et al., 2005).

Smith et al. (2009) explained that there is no single prescribed procedure for IPA analysis. Although it is not considered a prescribed methodology, Smith and Osborn’s (2008) suggested approach involves three steps: searching for themes in the first interview transcript, connecting the identified themes, and then analyzing the other cases. Based on IPA’s commitment to ideography, Smith et al. (2009) explained that most IPA analyses work in this
manner: “analyzing the first case in detail, moving on to the second case and doing the same, then moving on to the third case, and so on” (p. 82). This study followed a similar methodology.

Smith et al. (2009) noted that in the existing literature on IPA, no single method has been prescribed for working with the data. For the novice, they explained, this can be discouraging. They proposed a step by step process to help make the analysis of IPA more manageable for the novice. The following process borrowed from Smith et al. (2009) was followed for this study:

Step 1: Reading and re-reading.
Step 2: Initial noting.
Step 3: Developing emergent themes.
Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes.
Step 5: Moving to the next case.
Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases.

Following the transcription of each interview, a preliminary reading of each transcript was conducted by the researcher. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009), listening to the audio-recording of the interview accompanied this first reading. During this initial reading, no comments or markups were made. The purpose of this preliminary reading was to actively engage with the data to begin to enter and understand the participant’s world (Smith et al., 2009).

Step 1 and 2 of Smith et al.’s (2009) process were conducted simultaneously. During the second reading, comments and first impressions were recorded by the researcher. While re-reading the transcripts, the data were coded through free textural analysis. The goal of the initial coding, according to Smith et al. (2009), is to generate a detailed set of notes and comments on the data. During the second reading, as Smith et al. (2009) suggested, the recording of researcher recollections from the interview experience and initial observations were made. The initial
noting was broken into three discreet processes: descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual comments.

Descriptive commenting, as described by Smith et al. (2009) is an analysis of content that involves highlighting key words, phrases, and explanations shared by the participant. They further explained that during this stage, the goal is to highlight the things that make up the participant’s experience, to take things at face value, and focus on the objects that make up the participant’s world. This level of coding, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2014), focuses on the lived world of participants.

Linguistic commenting, according to Braun and Clarke (2014), “focuses on the language participants use and how they use it to communicate their experiences” (p. 214). The focus during this level of coding changes from the actual content and focuses on the word choices and how content was presented by the participant. Areas for attention, according to Smith et al. (2009) include pronoun use, repetition, pauses, laughter, and tone. During this phase, attention was paid to linguistic devices, such as metaphor, that were used to describe the experience.

Conceptual commenting is the third process of coding. This process, according to Braun and Clarke (2014), remains focused on the participant’s experience but interprets it from the researcher’s perspective. During this coding, the comments moved “away from the explicit claims of the participant” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 88). As Smith et al. (2009) further explained, conceptual commenting required a shift in focus toward more conceptual and abstract ideas of how the participant understood their experience.

Step 3 of Smith et al.’s (2009) process is the development of emergent themes. The purpose of this step was to transform the notes from step two into succinct statements of what was important in the various comments in the transcript. This process involved a focus on working primarily with the initial noting rather than with the original transcript. The themes
generated from the initial noting, according to Smith et al. (2009), reflected the original statements made by the participants, combined with the analyst’s interpretations.

The fourth step in Smith et al.’s (2009) process involved searching for connections across the emergent themes. The purpose of this step was to draw together all the emergent themes, and structure them in a manner that allowed the researcher to see the most interesting and important features of the participant’s account. This process involved reorganizing the data to allow the themes to follow a sequence familiar to the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). The processes of abstraction and subsumption were utilized for this study to reorganize the emergent themes. Abstraction identifies patterns between emergent themes to develop superordinate themes. This process involved grouping similar themes and developing a new name for this cluster (Smith et al., 2009). Subsumption is similar to abstraction, however, in some cases emergent themes become superordinate themes themselves.

The first four steps were repeated for each interview transcript. Smith et al. (2009) explained the importance of treating each case individually and bracketing the ideas and themes that emerged from previous cases. The final step in this process involved looking for patterns across all cases. During this step, all the individual transcripts were examined for connections between the different transcripts and the noted themes. After the completion of the initial coding, the researcher began to look for connections between the comments. The three levels of coding from each transcript were organized using a table in order to make connections between the emergent themes and superordinate themes for each participant.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study was delimited to a small number of participants that had experience living as expatriates and working in international schools. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommended a small number of participants for the qualitative method of IPA. They explained
that as IPA primarily concerns itself with the detailed description of the lived experience, IPA studies usually benefit from an in-depth focus on a small number of cases. Rather than making large generalizations, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is committed to the thorough analysis of specific cases and the human experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). As such IPA is often limited due to the small sample size. While this study utilized a small sample size, the aim was to understand in detail each participant’s experience living as an expatriate and working in an international school. Smith and Osborn (2008) explained that IPA uses small sample sizes because the aim is to “say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of a particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims” (p. 55). Due to the small sample size, the results are not generalizable to all international schools and all locations. Although the sample size was appropriate for an IPA study, it was limited in its ability to expose a true representation of the experience of living as an expatriate and working in an international school.

A limitation of this study was the fact that some countries are easier to acclimate into. As all schools, cities, countries, and cultures are different, the lived experience of each participant was vastly different. The challenges participants faced differed significantly. Differences in the prior experience of participants working overseas and exposure to the new cultures could also have affected the results. The researcher’s role as an international school administrator was another potential limitation. As recruiting was part of his role as an administrator, participants may have been hesitant to share negative comments.

A final limitation to this study involved the participant selection. Purposeful snowball sampling was utilized for the participant selection of this study. Participants were identified through personal contacts, referrals, and professional associations such as those working in International Baccalaureate schools, and participation in this study was completely
voluntary. As participation was completely voluntary, another limitation to this study may have been that it attracted participants who had negative experiences working as expatriate, international school teachers and were interested in sharing their experiences.

Conclusion

This study used interpretive phenomenological analysis to understand the lived experience of expatriate international school teachers and how this experience affected staff morale and job satisfaction. IPA, as a qualitative research method, relies heavily on in-depth interviews. Semistructured, one-on-one interviews, according to Reid et al. (2005), are the preferred means for collecting IPA data. Interview data were transcribed and coded based on the method suggested by Smith et al. (2009). While various studies have identified factors that contribute to staff morale and teacher job satisfaction, little research could be found regarding the experience of expatriate teachers working in international schools. This study documented the experiences of expatriate international school teachers to determine the factors that contribute to staff morale and teacher job satisfaction.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to understand the factors that expatriate international school teachers feel affect staff morale and job satisfaction. IPA was selected because it allows the researcher to not only understand individual experiences, but also how individuals perceive their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). According to Smith and Osborn (2008), “IPA is concerned with trying to understand what it is like, from the point of view of the participants, to take their side” (p. 53). Through an analysis of the individual narratives, the researcher attempted to make sense of the expatriate, international school teacher experience by isolating the commonalities and differences between the accounts presented by each of the participants. IPA, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), “is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world” (p. 55). Smith and Osborn (2008) further explained that as the aim of IPA is to explore the phenomenon in detail, IPA research questions are posed broadly and openly. In order to gain an understanding of the lived experience of the expatriate, international school teacher, the following questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do expatriate international school teachers perceive staff morale and teacher job satisfaction?

2. How does the experience of living as an expatriate affect staff morale and job satisfaction for international school teachers?

These questions, in conjunction with this study’s literature review, helped to develop the interview protocol (Appendix C) that was used when interviewing participants. While Smith et
al. (2009) described that there is no single prescribed method for working with IPA data, they proposed step by step guidelines to make the process manageable.

Data for this study were collected over a four-week period through interviews. All interviews were conducted online and recorded using Zoom, an online web-conferencing software that includes a recording feature. Participants were asked to provide any artifacts they felt would help to further describe their experience. These artifacts were collected and discussed during the interviews as additional sources of data. Artifacts included teacher appraisal forms, orientation slideshows, orientation schedules, teacher schedules, yearly calendars, and letters of reference. The audio files from the interviews were transcribed using Rev.com, a professional transcription service. Once completed, the transcriptions were reviewed by the researcher to ensure that no identifying information was included in the transcribed documents. Each participant was presented with a copy of their interview transcript for member checking. Member checks, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), involve providing participants the transcribed interviews for review. Participants were provided with the opportunity to make clarifications to their interview transcription. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) further described the importance of triangulation as a method of clarifying meaning through the gathering of multiple perspectives.

Throughout the coding process, the researcher read and listened to each transcript several times. The researcher then employed Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as the method for data analysis. The analysis of the interview data was guided by the process described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) which helped to create levels of coding that led to emergent and superordinate themes. The process was conducted by hand and involved reading and re-reading the transcriptions, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, and finally searching for patterns across transcripts.
Coding, according to Johnson and Christensen (2014), is the “process of marking segments of data with symbols, descriptive words, or category names” (p. 592). The initial coding was broken into three discrete processes: descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual comments. Descriptive commenting, according to Smith et al. (2009) is an analysis of content that entails highlighting key words, phrases, and explanations shared by the participant. Linguistic commenting focuses on the word choices and how content was presented by the participant. During the linguistic coding the researcher focused on linguistic devices, such as metaphor, that were used to describe the experience. Conceptual commenting is the third process of coding, and, according to Braun and Clarke (2014), the participant’s account is interpreted from the researcher’s perspective. Figure 1 provides an example of the levels of coding utilized for each transcript. Descriptive comments are highlighted in yellow, linguistic comments are in black ink, and conceptual comments are in blue ink.

Figure 1. Levels of coding applied to an interview transcript.
Once the initial coding was completed, the researcher began to look for connections between the comments. A table was created for each transcript to organize the three levels of coding and to begin to make connections between the emergent themes and superordinate themes for each participant. Table 2 is an example of the tables created for each transcript. Through the coding process, emergent themes were identified. At this stage the emergent themes were analyzed and chronological lists of emergent themes were made. Smith et al. (2009) described how superordinate themes can be identified through the processes of abstraction and subsumption. While abstraction is the process of identifying patterns between emergent themes to develop superordinate themes, subsumption is the process whereby an emergent theme itself becomes a superordinate theme (Smith et al., 2009). Through the process of abstraction, patterns between emergent themes were identified in order to develop superordinate themes. In some cases, the process of subsumption was utilized and emergent themes themselves became superordinate themes.
Table 2

Table of Emergent Themes from David’s Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Descriptive/ Frequently used</th>
<th>Linguistic/ Key Words</th>
<th>Conceptual Comments</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Superordinate Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>We get a lot of e-mails as teachers. If it’s “We realized this is pressure on you and we realized this late. We will do better next year and/or quarter, but this came down, and we’re really sorry”, then it’s good. The way communication is done is huge.</td>
<td>Reminder Indirectly shaming</td>
<td>Teachers are busy. Last minute changes are not very welcomed. Demonstrating an understanding of how busy people are can mean a lot to teachers. The way in which e-mails are written can come across as condescending. Admitting that one knows that it is last minute and that they apologize for it can help to build trust.</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

Nine expatriate teachers who worked in various international schools participated in semistructured interviews that lasted between 40 and 70 minutes. Table 3 provides a descriptive profile of the participants. Throughout the rest of this study, these participants will be referred to by their pseudonyms of “Zoe,” “Danielle,” “Grant,” “Linden,” “David,” “Marie,” “Sharon,” “Maey,” and “Susan.” All participants were working in international schools at the time of the interviews and had several years of experience teaching in foreign countries.
Table 3

Description of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Years Teaching as an Expatriate</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linden</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maey</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Zoe**

Zoe was a 27-year-old female. She was in her sixth year as a teacher, and all of her teaching experience had been in international schools. She was living with her partner in her host country. At the time she felt that the staff morale at her school was rather low. Zoe had experience living in two foreign countries. She expressed that it was a challenge moving from one country to the other because she felt culturally, some countries set higher priorities and expectations for education.

**Danielle**

Danielle was a 47-year-old female with over 25 years of teaching experience. She had been teaching in international schools for approximately 18 years and had lived in three different countries. At the time of the interview she was just completing her first year in the school she was working in. Through her experience, Danielle had worked at both very large and very small schools. She explained that one school’s location was so remote that all teachers had to live on campus. She recounted that while this living arrangement was very convenient, the nature of living and working in such a tight-knit community posed social challenges.
Grant

Grant was a 39-year-old married male. His wife lived with him in his host country and he met her while working in a different country during a previous teaching post. He had been teaching in international schools for six years and had approximately 10 years of experience as an educator. Grant had experience working in two different international schools. At the time of the interview he felt that morale at his current school was strong. Grant was originally from England. While he expressed that he very much enjoyed living as an expatriate and working in an international school, he shared that a major drawback is he occasionally feels like he has left his extended family behind. Grant had a passion for sports and used this passion to meet other people in his host country.

Linden

Linden was a 40-year-old married male and his wife was from his host country. He had seven years of teaching experience and was just completing the fourth year at his current school. Linden had experience working in two different international schools and all of his teaching experience was international. At the time of the interview, Linden felt that morale at his current school was high. He explained that the teachers seemed quite happy with their working environment. Linden’s experience working as an expatriate international school teacher differed from the other participants in this study because he was raised speaking the host language and while considered an expatriate, he had relatives who lived in the country.

David

David was a 45-year-old married male with 21 years of teaching experience. His wife was from his host country. All of his teaching experience had been in international schools and he had worked in four different schools, all within the same country. At the time of the interview he was just completing the first year at his current school. Through his experience as an
international school teacher, he had worked in large and small schools and described that they all had differences in morale. David held a master’s degree in educational leadership, and his familiarity with the intricacies of leadership were apparent. His background was in education technology and he regularly set up workshops with companies such as Google and Apple.

Marie

Marie was a 51-year-old female. She had 19 years’ experience working in international schools worked in eight different schools in various countries. Marie had over 29 years of teaching experience and at the time of the interview was just completing two months at her current school. She described the morale at her current school as fairly positive compared to the other international schools where she had worked. Marie felt that there were distinct differences between staff morale in international schools and schools back in a person’s home country. She described that back home, teachers generally liked their schools or they did not; they liked their principals or they did not. Regardless of how a teacher felt about their school, they could leave work at work. Teaching internationally, she explained, the line between work and home life is much more blurred.

Sharon

Sharon was a 48-year old single female. She had 18 years’ experience working as an expatriate international school teacher and was just completing six years at her current school. She was planning to return to her home country. Sharon had over 20 years of teaching experience and had experience working in three different countries. Through her experience, Sharon has worked with a wide variety of teachers. She found it challenging working with unmotivated teachers and explained that international education occasionally attracts teachers for the wrong reasons. Sharon illustrated that some people enjoy travelling and take on international teaching posts hoping that their school will pay for their travels. The teachers she recounted she
enjoyed working with are those who have “professional pride”; those who really want to be teachers, and it just so happens that they are teaching abroad.

**Susan**

Susan was a 49-year-old married female and mother of two children. She had 29 years of experience as a teacher, and at one time held an administrative position as a school principal. At the time of the interview she had been working as an expatriate international school teacher for five years. She was just completing a 2-year contract before returning to her home country. She had experience working in two different international schools in two different countries. Her experience differed from the other participants in this study as her family accompanied her on her international teaching posts. She and her husband worked in the same schools and her children attended international schools in the host countries.

**Maey**

Maey was a 50-year-old single female from a developing country. She had taught for approximately 27 years and had been working in international schools for the past 13 years. Maey had experience working in two different international schools and at the time of the interview was just completing the tenth year at her current school. Through her career Maey had taken on various roles from science teacher to curriculum coordinator.

**Artifacts**

Triangulation, according to Creswell (2007), is the use of multiple sources of data in order to corroborate evidence. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) further described the importance of triangulation as a method of clarifying meaning through the gathering of multiple perspectives. In order to ensure triangulation, participants were asked to provide any artifacts they felt would help to further describe their experience. These artifacts were collected and discussed during the interviews as separate sources of data. While all participants were requested to send the
researcher copies of artifacts prior to interviews, not all participants were able to do so. Of the nine participants, four participants were able to provide artifacts. Table 4 provides a list of the types of artifacts provided by participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>Letter of reference from a previous employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of English teaching allocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>New staff welcome list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching timetable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School calendar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>School institutional self-appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Elementary school orientation schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation slideshow—curriculum and assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation slideshow—school procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher appraisal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher self-appraisal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Presentation of Themes**

This section will present the common themes that participants felt affected staff morale in international schools. The common themes were isolated in the data as they emerged within and across cases. The superordinate themes identified include leadership, having a supportive school, salary and benefits, and integration into the host culture. Each superordinate theme is composed of multiple subthemes that provide deeper insight into the results of this study. The description of each superordinate theme and the accompanying subthemes highlight each expatriate international school teacher’s experience and describe the different aspects that they felt affected the morale in the international schools where they had worked. Table 5 presents the themes and subthemes identified through the analysis.
Table 5

*Teacher Satisfaction and Staff Morale in International Schools: Themes and Subthemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Positive interactions with school leadership promote morale</td>
<td>1. Supportive leadership promotes trust and autonomy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Effective communication is valued by teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Scheduling requires forethought and purpose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Professional growth should drive staff appraisals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Variations in benefits and salary affect morale</td>
<td>1. Contracts can cause anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Inequalities exist between contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A supportive school promotes acclimation</td>
<td>1. Teachers require basic needs support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The school is the hub for initial relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Integration into the local community promotes independence</td>
<td>3. A thoughtful orientation welcomes and supports new teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Minimizing the language barrier allows for greater integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Developing a life outside of school generates a greater support network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Positive Interactions with School Leadership Promote Morale**

When asked to describe the staff morale at their current schools, seven of the nine participants described how interactions with the school leadership had an effect on morale and job satisfaction. Four of the seven participants who discussed leadership focused their comments around working as a team with the administration. They expressed that being visible, not being authoritative, and understanding the pressure on teachers had a positive effect on staff morale.
Throughout the conversations, both positive and negative comments were elucidated, and the participants expressed that the way their school leadership interacted with staff, guided the school, and provided support had a significant impact on staff morale and their job satisfaction. In sharing her experiences, Marie expressed a need to make a distinction between a leader and a supervisor. She described her principal as “first and foremost a teacher instead of a people manager” and further described that her principal “leads as a leader rather than as a manager.” Marie praised this administrator for working with the staff and understanding them as people, not simply as staff members. In describing the manner in which this administrator leads the school she explained “it’s not a top-down sort of authoritarian approach, it’s very much collaborative and collegial.” David echoed this sentiment as he explained how he felt teachers view a school’s leader-follower dynamic. He said “I really think that teachers, as staff, need to feel that they’re working with their administration, not working for them.” Both Marie and David seemed to view this relationship as a partnership, rather than a power structure. Danielle further expressed that “it is really important for leadership to be engaged with teachers, and not in their offices.” She seemed to feel a need for administrators to be visible around the schools and actively participating in the teaching and learning taking place.

Subtheme 1: Supportive leadership promotes trust and autonomy. Common themes discussed by seven participants were trusting relationships with administrators and the feeling of being appreciated. In describing the type of engagement leadership can demonstrate in order to promote morale, Danielle spoke about professional interactions that were valued by teachers. She explained that teachers “are looking for principals to be visiting classrooms, giving them feedback about teaching and learning, feeling like principals appreciate the hard work that they’re doing.” It is apparent that Danielle genuinely felt that the work of a teacher is demanding and that being recognized for responding well to those demands was important to her. Linden
explained that he often participated in extracurricular activities at his school, such as providing after-school tutoring, volunteering to take students on charity trips, or accompanying students to math competitions. He explained that he regularly received praise and recognition for his participation, whether through e-mail or when meeting face-to-face. He explained that “people will congratulate you, and it feels good when you get that recognition.” It is evident that Linden appreciated being acknowledged for putting in the extra work even though he knew it is not an expectation.

Sharon described how a lack of appreciation for a staff, or a lack of valuing teachers, can have a negative effect on staff morale. She described that at one school an administrator was quoted as saying “Teachers are like onions, I can pick them up anywhere.” Through her description, Sharon felt that some administrators viewed teachers as expendable. She further described that due to such attitudes, some ex-colleagues made the decision to leave the school mid-contract. Through Sharon’s description, it seemed that some staff members reacted so strongly to the unsupportive nature of an administrator that they were willing to give up their teaching post to search for another.

Another topic discussed by participants was the need to feel trusted and empowered by the school administration. Linden explained that staff morale at his school was quite high and one reason he described was that the teachers had the freedom to apply their preferred teaching methods to their instruction. “We have a lot of freedom at my school, I have never felt that I’m being watched over.” He further explained that “the administrators give teachers the freedom to do what they do, and put trust in the teachers, that teachers feel at ease and actually feel like they want to do well because they’ve been trusted to do the job.” This freedom and trust, he said, was appreciated by him and his colleagues. Marie also described the importance of providing teachers with a certain amount of autonomy in their classrooms. “Give them a choice” she
explained, “give them a voice and empower that agency so that they don’t feel it is authoritative, and you’re going to get that buy-in, you’re going to get the sense of ownership and community.” Danielle also recounted that she felt the need for teachers to be given a certain amount of autonomy. She explained that principals need to lead by example and “give their teachers a degree of autonomy and ability to be leaders themselves within their own area of expertise.” She felt that while teachers needed guidance, they also needed to be provided with opportunities to lead themselves. A school’s leadership, according to participants, could demonstrate support for teachers by allowing autonomy, ensuring teachers are valued and appreciated, recognizing the efforts of teachers, and providing useful feedback for professional growth.

**Subtheme 2: Effective communication is valued by teachers.** The effectiveness of communication within a school was a common theme discussed by some participants. When asked about factors that contribute to the low morale within some circles in her school, Zoe replied that communication was a contributing cause:

> At work I guess the communication is quite poor, say when it relates to work stuff. It's like the communication is muddled or not very consistent. So, it's hard to know exactly what's going on at work and you have to ask a million different people, and it's really difficult to get a handle on things.

The communication about what needed to be done at school and how it was to be accomplished did not seem reliable according to the description Zoe provided. She used the word *muddled* to describe the communication, and this indicated obscurity and confusion. Her use of the word *million* revealed that she was frustrated by having to ask many people for clarity. It also appeared that understanding how to effectively navigate her work world was something she desired.

Zoe further explained that while various educational and organizational policies existed in her school, the lack of effective communication limited the teachers’ ability to enforce them:
It's supposed to be, by policy, that we get informed of the list of students who are supposed to be going on a trip, and we're allowed to say, "They're not doing well in my class, they’re not working hard, they're not showing up." We're supposed to be allowed to say they don't go on the trip, but the communication isn't good enough. So, we end up not being able to do that and I think that if that policy worked and was done properly, the students would stop thinking that everything else is important except what goes on in the classroom.

The policy stated that underperforming students could be refused participation in school trips, however, as the communication was ineffective, the teachers were unable to enforce the policy. The description suggested that Zoe was not satisfied with the students’ level of effort. She seemed to think that many students did not prioritize their classroom learning over other school activities. It also appeared that she felt the school’s lack of attention in this area indicated it was not interested in changing student priorities.

Through her experience in many international schools, Sharon noted that staff morale can move in cycles depending on the time of the school year. As such, she explained that the timing of communication is critical:

So, if you are going to introduce something, make sure it's not during one of the times where it's low. So, try and figure out when that cycle happens. And I say it is a pretty regular cycle that I've seen in all schools. When you know that that cycle is low, don't introduce something that's new and stressful. And wait until it's at one of the highest periods and people are a lot more open to those changes.

Sharon seemed to understand that change was inevitable in schools; however, she also felt that administrators needed to be mindful of when these changes were communicated. Her use of the word stressful indicated that she also understood that change could be a cause of anxiety for
some teachers, but also explained that teachers may be more open to change during periods of high morale.

David shared similar concerns about the timing of communication within some schools. He described:

People do not like last-minute email, especially when a last-minute email says something like "Make sure you do this by Friday," or sometimes, in particular, "This is just a reminder to do this by Friday," and if it's actually the first message, and it's not a reminder, it implies that, well, I'm going to put the word reminder in there just to make people think that it was a reminder.

David indicated that he did not like it when insufficient time or advanced warning was given, or when administrators suggested an e-mail was a reminder when it was not. Note that the example he provided said make sure. This seemed to convey that in his experience he felt he had been commanded by an administrator by e-mail. There also appeared to be some distrust between him and the administrators. He seemed to indicate that the way a message is communicated could be a way for administrators to try and deceive others. This distrust was also apparent in the following quote from David:

Again, going back to that communication from admin, if it's "We realized this is pressure on you. We realized this is late. We will do better next year and/or next quarter, but this came down, and we're really sorry," so the way communication is done is huge. I will say I have experiences where "Please get this done in the next two weeks." We're given a date, and then, literally, a week later, "Thank you to this person, this person, this person, this person that did it." It's indirectly shaming the people that did not.
David’s description demonstrated that if a school’s administration admitted they had made a mistake, and that they should have communicated the information in a timely manner, then the staff would be satisfied. However, David also noted that although praising some people for accomplishing a task ahead of schedule may seem supportive and communicative, it is in fact a way of belittling those who have not. The timeliness and communication execution were of significant importance to these participants.

**Subtheme 3: Scheduling requires forethought and purpose.** Teacher schedules impact teacher contact, preparation, and release time. As such, it was indicated that individual teacher schedules have the ability to affect staff morale. Scheduling, for David, needed to be thoughtfully planned, balanced, and conducted in a way that prioritized teaching and learning. He stated, “I think another thing that, honestly, affects staff morale is scheduling.” David further expressed some of the frustrations he has experienced with scheduling:

> I've been to schools where you've got a 40-minute period, and it's like done, and there is no five minutes in between. You go to the next class, it's just like boom, boom, boom. I've been to a school where you have 11 periods a day, and why did we have 11 periods, because the administrator had to squeeze stuff in and didn't take the time to properly plan it, okay? Then it was either feast or famine. You have a day where you have three classes out of 11 or you're doing nine. That is poor planning, and teachers hate that.

David saw himself as being at the mercy of administrators when it came to scheduling. He felt that when the schedule was set, that teachers just needed to deal with it. His use of the word *boom, boom, boom* seemed to signify that he felt that with back-to-back, non-stop scheduling, teachers were basically an assembly line of robots teaching classes. It was also apparent that David felt that a lack of forethought and planning with regards to scheduling caused teachers a
great deal of frustration. The phrase *feast or famine* generally means that something is always extremely high in abundance or low in supply. Having an unbalanced teaching schedule with extremely heavy and extremely light teaching days also seemed to irritate David. He explained that “The scheduling has got to work for the kids and for the teachers, but focus more on the kids, obviously, but not the convenience of administration.” David used the word *convenience*, which gave the impression that when a lack of forethought into scheduling occurred, he felt it was just what was easiest for administrators.

Zoe acknowledged that there was rarely enough time to complete the work. She explained “I know I'm never going to feel like I have enough time, I don't think that's possible.” Zoe noted that there was no designated teacher lunch time at her current school. For teachers who taught in both the middle school and the high school, they needed to use one of their preparation periods for lunch. She explained:

> You get it where you can each day, yeah and it takes out that prep that you don't realize until you get here. Like that's five preps a week gone if you want to sit and have lunch, but most people work through lunch.

Zoe’s description of getting lunch *where you can each day* indicated that it was a struggle for teachers to find time to take their lunch break. It also appeared, through her account, that teachers had to choose between using their time for preparation, or for having a lunch break.

The amount of contact time a teacher was allocated could also affect a teacher’s morale according to Zoe. An artifact she produced was the English department teacher allocation chart for the upcoming school year. In previous years she taught five different classes four times a week, for a total of 20 classes. She felt preparing for five different grade levels to be quite heavy, especially when losing five periods a week for a lunch break. Her head of department, she explained, recognized the effort she had been displaying all year and “really pushed for me to
have one less class to deal with.” She expressed that her morale was already a little higher knowing about the change in scheduling and anticipating having “a little bit more breathing room.”

**Subtheme 4: Professional growth should drive staff appraisals.** Teacher evaluation systems, it was identified, can be a very useful tool for professional growth. When the purpose of staff appraisals is unclear, or they are viewed simply as evaluative tools, they can have a negative effect on staff morale. When asked about staff appraisals David commented that “They’re totally connected to morale.” Through his description he explained various appraisal systems he has seen in use at the various schools he has worked at. One system of which he was fond of took on a collaborative, collegial approach. He explained that this system was about teachers learning from each other. Another teacher would visit a different teacher’s lesson and they would later share ideas about what they thought was effective and how they might improve the lesson. It seemed apparent that David felt that this type of collegial sharing to be a worthwhile activity.

Another appraisal system David spoke of was comprised of a one-off observation from a member of the school administration. The observation was followed by feedback from the observer. He was aware that the purpose of these types of observations were simply a means of administrators “coming in for a snapshot” of the teaching and learning taking place. He noted that some teachers did not appreciate the feedback and had the opinion that administrators “haven’t taught for 15 years and they’re coming and telling me how to teach.” He explained that administrators needed to make the purpose of appraisals clear and transparent for all staff. He felt that administrators should explain that “this is our appraisal process. Please keep in mind that this is not saying whether you’re a good or a bad teacher.” He seemed to feel that some teachers were intimidated by appraisal systems as they can come across as evaluative and judgmental.
While discussing a self-appraisal document Marie presented as an artifact for this study, she expressed that staff appraisals, and their usefulness, depend on who is doing the appraising. She described a former administrator’s approach to staff appraisals and the use of a self-appraisal:

Two of the years that I used that tool I had an appraiser who was phenomenal, and she really took it as, I am here to help you grow as a professional, you tell me what you need. You tell me what you think.

Through her description, Marie seemed to value administrators who worked with teachers through appraisal systems and who used them as a means a professional growth. In contrast, she described another previous administrator who was highly critical. She described that this person, who had never once observed her teaching, expected her to provide a self-appraisal and then made an evaluative judgement based on little evidence. As a self-described “lifelong learner”, she explained that this process was simply something all teachers had to do, and that it was not at all meaningful to her. Trust between the teacher and the administrator completing the appraisal was important to Marie. She explained that in addition to “having good morale about your own growth and development”, it is important that teachers understand the appraisal purpose and process and having an appraiser you have some trust in.

Zoe had a different experience with staff appraisals. Although mini-observations were conducted by two different administrators, she explained that she received little to no feedback. She recounted how the minimal feedback she received was delivered. “One guy sent me an audio file by email of this feedback and it was a few minutes, but I didn't really appreciate that too much because it didn't open up a conversation.” The way feedback is delivered and providing time for a conversation about a teacher’s strengths and areas for growth, appeared to be important to Zoe, as it is for Marie.
As an artifact, Zoe presented a letter of reference from a department head she previously worked for. She explained that this department head regularly provided her with feedback on her performance. Through this feedback she was reassured that she was doing her job well. Zoe explained how a lack of feedback on her performance at her current school was making her feel uneasy:

Here there’ve been quite a few times in the year where I've honestly felt like I don't know if I'm doing the right thing, or what they want me to be doing. It's even making me feel a bit paranoid that will they even want to keep me after my contract?

Responsive feedback, Zoe explained, would mean a lot to her as she felt anxious without it. She further expressed how important feedback can be when working as an expatriate teacher in an international school. Without a complete understanding of the local culture, she explained, it was possible to make cultural faux pas and unintentionally offend people. This could be a student, a parent, or even a member of the school faculty or administration. Leadership, and the way in which leaders demonstrated their understanding of teachers’ needs, appeared to have an effect on morale with an international school staff.

**Theme 2: Variations in Benefits and Salary Affect Morale**

As participants shared their experiences and some of the reasons they teach internationally, the topics of benefits and salary were discussed. Six of the nine participants felt that issues related to salary and benefits had an impact on staff morale. While all six of the participants who discussed variations in benefits and salary shared that the expatriate lifestyle affords some luxuries they may not have at home, four participants expressed concerns with inequality in contracts. The opportunities for saving money and travel were described by Zoe as an attractive element of living and teaching as an expatriate. She noted that “financially, it is
wonderful”, and that she had been able to “save quite a bit” while travelling. She recounted that in her home city the general cost of living was very expensive. While everyone she knew at home were “just muddling on through and getting by,” she felt she was “doing quite well.” While she enjoyed the luxuries of being able to experience hotel brunches, she did seem somewhat conflicted. She explained that “it’s horrible to say, but it is that the money is a big thing.” She also expressed that it was materialistic of her to enjoy the things she never thought she would be able to afford when she was young.

Grant also described similar benefits of working as an expatriate teacher. The low cost of living in his current country allowed his salary to go further, and he believed this had a positive effect on staff morale. Although earning less than he might in his home country, he described that “what I can buy with it, my quality of life is much better. There's no comparison.” He further explained that there were luxuries he could afford that he would not be able to in his home country. He explained:

I wouldn't say that I sort of spend frivolously or anything. But not having to worry at the end of each month is a big deal. When I was teaching in the UK I used to rent out my spare rooms so I could pay part of my mortgage. And now I've got it made. I never thought I'd have someone in cleaning, tidying up, and cooking for me. That's what rich people do.

Although Grant was not saying that he was rich, he understood that the lavishness this lifestyle provided, he could not have afforded in his home country.

Danielle also described the opportunities for travel, the salary, the quality of life, and the benefits of working as an expatriate teacher. In one country she lived in, she explained that they had a cleaning and ironing service on campus, and that they had all their meals provided for by the school cafeteria.
She further described:

And most international teachers get into international teaching because they enjoy travel. That's a huge one. I think financially, the packages are great. It's not the finances as much as it's the quality of life that you're able to have on your salary overseas is very different than the quality of life you would have back home.

Danielle acknowledged that salary alone did not provide the luxuries, but was the cost of living less. She further illustrated that in some countries “you can do things and afford things that you wouldn’t be able to afford back home”, such as having a cleaning person in your home twice a week or having a driver. Although these benefits are attractive to many, some participants shared concerns with the way international school provide benefits.

**Subtheme 1: Contracts can cause anxiety.** Zoe and Sharon expressed similar concerns with being contracted workers in international schools. Zoe was troubled that with the lack of professional feedback at her current school, she could not gauge whether the school administration was satisfied with her work performance. As she was up for contract renewal, she felt anxious that she may not be offered a continuing contract, and could then be out of a job. Sharon shared this apprehension about international school contracts:

You never know whether you're going to get rehired or something. So you might have a one-year contract, and then suddenly you've been told that, "Yeah, I'm sorry. We don't like you very much. You can leave this year." Well, then you've got to do it all over again and go to a new place. And the same with two years. So just because you want to stay doesn't mean that that school wants you to stay.

Through her description, Sharon felt that international school teachers were at the mercy of administrators and that continued employment depended on how the teacher was perceived by the administration. Her use of the word *told* signified that she felt that contractual decisions were
one-way, and that international school teachers had minimal control over their job security. When asked if she felt the contractual nature of international schools affected staff morale and caused anxiety, she replied that it could have an impact depending on the person. The two most stressful things in life, she reported, are “moving house” and “finding a job.” She explained that when you put them both together, you have an international school teacher.

In discussing benefits packages, David shared his thoughts on international school contracts. According to his description, he did not believe that simply being contracted workers, or being on fixed-term contracts, affected the morale in individual international schools. When asked whether he believed contracts had a direct impact on morale, he explained:

I don't think so in the international school world, and the reason why is that it is industry standard that you're hired either for one year and renewed, or you're hired for two years and then renewed each year. Schools have very small variation in that area in terms of how frequently you're hired and rehired. I really don't think that's an issue at all in terms of morale.

Through his experience working at four different international schools, David noted that all schools tended to use contracts. He concluded, however, that if contracts affected staff morale, and all international schools hired contractually, that they would all experience similar morale. It is important to note that when comparing working in an international school with working in his home country, David expressed that teachers back home tended to have more job security. “Teachers back home”, he, explained, “they get tenure, and then they’re safe, or if they’re part of the union, then they’re safe.” Through his use of the word safe in his comparison, it seemed that he may have felt there was some instability in being continuously under contact as an international school teacher. Although he felt that simply being under contract did not affect
morale, David did express concerns with the inequality of contracts evident in some international schools.

**Subtheme 2: Inequalities exist between contracts.** The inequality between some contracts, different schools, and some nationalities was a concern conveyed by some participants. Danielle illustrated an experience she had where the local staff seemed to be treated differently:

That was an issue more in my school in Egypt. Yes, we had local staff but it tended to be more hierarchical. There was very much, Egyptian staff felt they were treated like they were inferior to the international staff. I think to some degree that's always going to be an issue in an international school setting, because it seems to me, anyway, that any international school I've been at, the pay scale is different.

In describing this situation as hierarchical, Danielle appeared to feel that the inequality she noticed at a previous school was based on the local culture. She further explained that when this inequality is set up “from the beginning”, and “one group is already treated differently”, especially when compensation is concerned, there is a high likelihood of resentment.

Zoe shared concerns that new teachers moving into her school were not aware of the discrepancies between the salaries of the foreign hired staff and the local staff. She explained that in some ways “we’re basically modeling inequality.” When asked if she felt this inequality affected staff morale, she agreed but also described that it led to a divide between groups of teachers. She explained:

This is also why I think that divide, until international schools start paying more fairly because I think in some it's criminal what they pay local staff. Until they
start paying more fairly or more evenly, I just don't think there's anything, I don't think there'll ever be not a divide.

Zoe’s description indicated that she was concerned about this division, but also that she felt someone was to blame. Her use of the word *they* signified that a group of people, possibly school owners or board members, were responsible for the inequality. Zoe further expressed that this inequality implied that one group of staff was valued by the administration more than the other.

David shared similar concerns. He explained that if a teacher was not from that city, but from the same country, they may have been considered a local hire and would not receive equivalent benefits as a teacher hired from a foreign country. He expressed that a similar situation could happen to an expatriate teacher moving from one school to another within the same country. He reported:

They might say, "Okay, we're going to honor that contract because you were hired from outside. We'll give you the airfare and the apartment." A lot of schools won't do that. They'll say, "You're hired locally. We're giving you a local hire contract.” That affects staff morale as well because people are doing the same amount of work.

According to David’s description, the salary and benefits packages between two expatriate teachers doing the same job could be different based on the location from which they were hired. While participants noted differences and inequalities in contracts based on nationality and hiring location, inequalities based on gender were not expressed.

When asked about the effects contracts have on staff morale, Maey initially passed on the question. Later in the interview she asked if she could address that question. She was hesitant to share her feelings but finally explained how some of her colleagues felt. “Some teachers will say,
Maey, why is it that sometimes if it is a native speaker, they’re given more? Why are we not given the same thing when we can do better?” Using the word we indicated that the colleagues she was referring to were from the same country as she was from. Maey further explained that she often asked herself why there was this difference in salary but was hesitant to bring up the topic because “friction between the admin and us would start.” Participants indicated that they felt the manner in which administrators supported teachers, ensured equality, and allowed for professional growth, could affect the morale of the staff.

Theme 3: A Supportive School Promotes Acclimation

The participants in this study were expatriate teachers working in international schools. Through the interviews, seven of the nine participants identified areas of school support they felt could affect staff morale. All seven of these participants expressed that they relied on their schools at some point for basic needs support. Three of these seven discussed the need for support when dealing with visa issues. One participant described a situation where, due to the physical location of the school, she depended on her school for her physical safety. Most of the subthemes focused on ways international schools provided for basic needs, developed a sense of community, and assisted teachers in acclimating to their new surroundings. According to Marie, international school teachers depended on their schools for support. She explained that “in the international teaching community, often the school becomes the hub or the center point for your support system. Particularly if you live in a country where there's a language barrier or a cultural barrier.” She seemed to feel that this dependence on the school was a fundamental difference between living as an expatriate teacher and teaching in your home country.

Subtheme 1: Teachers require basic needs support. Moving to a new country, according to participants, presented its own challenges and stresses, and concern to have basic needs met was reported. According to Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy, basic human needs are
comprised of the safety and security needs as well as physiological needs such as food, water, warmth and rest. As expatriate teachers, some participants described how through their experiences, their basic needs were and were not met by their schools. Sharon recalled situations where teachers she knew encountered visa problems from the very beginning of their employment with schools. She described:

I just had a friend who was in Country C and they were having issues with visas, so they're already nervous going into the country. And, of course, it's Country C. There's certain things about that country that might mean that you're a bit nervous anyway. Then, when you get there you're told there's been issues with your visa, so you don't actually have the proper visa right now. And is it okay if you work on a visa that's not the correct visa until it all gets sorted out? And you may get deported at any moment.

Through this description Sharon described the uneasiness a friend of hers felt by simply relocating to a certain country, and then being asked to work without the proper visa which could in fact have been illegal and caused legal problems. She recounted that the visa problem was communicated to her friend only after arriving to the country.

Grant also described problems he has had with visas and further explained how basic needs support could affect staff morale. He conveyed that his visa problem “in theory shouldn't affect how I am at work. But at the same time that's an extra stress that you would never have in your normal workplace.” The term *normal workplace* referred to working in one’s home country as a visa would not be necessary. Grant further described that the more a teacher did not need to worry about things outside of the workplace, the happier they would be at work. He depicted that with communication and language challenges, it was easy to become frustrated living in a different country. In describing how much expatriate international school teachers depend on
their schools he said, “You almost go back to being a child in many ways and you need someone to help you, hold your hand.” By comparing expatriates to children, and how expatriates often needed someone to metaphorically hold their hand indicated just how strongly Grant felt a reliance on his school for many basic, everyday needs.

Danielle conveyed similar feelings as Grant. She explained that in addition to housing, expatriate teachers “need to know where to go to get their basic needs met.” The way Danielle described the importance of knowing where to go to get needs met indicated that she felt that expatriate teachers often needed to rely on others to satisfy many basic needs. She further explained that international teachers “need to feel like… they need to not worry about their lives and their living situation.” Grant explained how schools can plan ahead to provide support with basic needs:

So on one of those days where something goes wrong in your house or with your car, the school can say, "Yeah we know like, it's gonna get you down, but we've got a great guy, a person who can deal with this for you. Don't worry, just give us the details and we'll get it sorted."

In addition to helping expatriate teachers deal with day to day problems, he felt that schools leaders should also be able to relate to teachers on a personal level when difficulties with basic needs arise.

Marie’s experience with basic needs revolved solely around her physical safety. After relocating to a new country, she was so worried about her safety that she had to make a drastic decision. In her situation, she explained, “the actual living and working environments were physically unsafe and so trying to deal with that was an incredibly new challenge.” While Marie had experience living and working in many countries, she recounted that this was the first time she had been confronted with such a lack of personal security. She even stated that:
It never occurred to me to break contract before, that’s just not who I am but it very much came down to I don’t know if I’m going to survive being here so I need to get myself out of this situation.

In the end Marie decided to break her contract because she didn’t feel her safety needs were being met.

Susan, who had just moved to a new country a few short days earlier, described a situation she had been confronted with:

I mean, for me it was quite a dramatic thing, for me I had arrived in Shanghai and I’d been here for five days, and I got the phone-call from home that my mom was in the hospital, and she had 24 hours to live and I needed to get on a plane and get home right now.

As Susan’s residential permit was being processed at the time, her passport was at an immigration office and she was unable to leave the country. She explained that her principal “moved heaven and earth to get my passport back.” This metaphor, moving heaven and earth, indicated that she felt her principal went above and beyond expectations to provide her with support beyond the classroom. She was able to make it home and her mother recovered. While at home though, Susan described that her principal continued to check in with her and provide emotional support. She explained that to her “that showed me that this was gonna be a place where we were going to be happy.” Susan further explained that this experience demonstrated to her how much she was going to appreciate working for this principal.

**Subtheme 2: The school is the hub for initial relationship development.** When participants were asked to describe the relationships they had developed working as expatriate international school teachers, strong bonds between staff members and community development became recurring themes. When Susan was asked if her relationships with colleagues was
different working as an expatriate than when working in her home country, she exclaimed “Absolutely, one thousand and fifty percent!” She illustrated how “everyone is thrust into a new environment, everyone’s without their support systems from home.” Her use of the word *thrust* signified that the move to a new country can be feel like being abruptly thrown into a new and unfamiliar environment.

Grant, Zoe, Sharon, and Marie all shared similar perceptions about how expatriate international school teachers tended to depend on each other for support. Marie expressed that relationships with coworkers took on “a lot more weight” in an international school setting. She explained that in your home country you tend to have those people around who you grew up with, and “you don’t have to worry about navigating the cultural differences, or the linguistic differences.” Grant reported that as expatriate teachers move into new countries as strangers, they need to build a social network and make new friends. Sharon conveyed that when a person is new to a country “you don’t have that community feeling” because your family isn’t there. According to Zoe, when working in her home country, she did not need as much social support from her work as she had her own private network. She explained that for many international school teachers she worked with, the school took on the role of family.

Sharon, Marie, and David also shared their views on some of the challenges of working in international school communities. Sharon described that a school could be “shooting itself in the foot” when they arrange too many social events for staff. She expressed that teachers could become too dependent on the school to provide for their social needs and that “it’s unhealthy to spend all of your time just with teachers.” David shared that he had occasionally noticed that international school teachers lived “in a little bubble.” This bubble referred to a community of teachers who made their coworkers the center of their social world and had a limited social life outside of work. If this bubble became a pessimistic bubble, he explained, it could have begun to
negatively impact others around the school and the morale. Marie felt that back at home she was more able to “leave work at work and then have your real life.” She felt that in an international school community, it was more challenging to make this distinction between work life and personal life.

**Subtheme 3: A thoughtful orientation welcomes and supports new teachers.**

International schools go about staff orientation in a variety of ways. Marie believed the best orientation programs she had been a part of took place over two weeks. The first week was set up to help teachers new to the country acclimate and the second week included all returning staff. As an artifact Marie presented two orientation slideshows and an orientation schedule. She explained that many of the staff orientations she had participated in covered too much information about policies and procedures during the first weeks. She explained how information overload could feel when a person is new to a country:

> At that point you're covered with Teflon and everything falls off. Nothing sticks because what you're worried about is, where am I going to live? How do I get my bank account, or my ATM card? How do I get my travel card, or the metro, or a scooter, or whatever? How do I get into my classroom and set up?

According to her description, it seemed that Marie felt that teachers new to a country had difficulty absorbing information about school policies when they were not yet set up and accustomed to their new surroundings. She further illustrated that at the conclusion of orientation week, some teachers were anxious because their basic needs had not been met. The things that were a priority to these new teachers had not yet been addressed.

David, Sharon, and Danielle described how essential they perceived a thorough orientation was for teachers new to a country and a school, and the effect the orientation could have on staff morale. Sharon used her experience travelling by bus to and from Chiang Mai and
Bangkok in Thailand as a comparison. She explained that when you arrive in Chiang Mai after travelling overnight you are woken up and they say “Hello. You're in Chiang Mai now. It's time to wake up. Hello everybody. We're going to give you breakfast and then find you a place to stay.” She explained it is “very sweet and kind, and everyone is very nice.” She then explained that when you arrive in Bangkok from Chiang Mai they turn on the lights and say “Get off the bus and go!” Sharon seemed to feel that some schools made new teachers feel exceptionally welcomed when they arrived, while other schools did not. She further explained that first impressions definitely count and that if a new teacher had a bad first impression, it “takes a lot to get that out of your head.”

David expressed that the first week of orientation is important because “first impressions are massive.” He seemed to feel that the new staff orientation a school plans had a big effect on the first impression a teacher had of their new school. He described that “you want people to be met at the airport, taken to their hotel or their apartment right away, given ridiculous amounts of support. You want your teachers that are returning to be there with open arms.” David perceived that teachers needed not only to be provided with the basic needs, but also that they needed to feel welcomed by the school community. The first page of the orientation schedule he presented as an artifact introduced and welcomed all new staff members and their positions within the school. Even before returning to school, all returning staff were aware of the new staff and who they would be working with. He explained that at one school, as soon as he arrived, his department head warmly greeted him by name, gave him a hug, and introduced him around. He expressed that “When you get to a place and people are, well, they seem happy and getting along well, then it's like, "Okay, this is a good place." This type of welcome, he felt, is a great way to begin at a new school.
Danielle described the negative effect an ineffective and unprepared orientation could have on staff morale:

I think one of the key things that needs to happen is schools need to really pay attention to the first impression they give people when they arrive, so the whole welcome process and orientation process that happens is critical. Because, if people start off on a sour note, that really colors things and you don't want a whole cohort of people coming in with a sour taste in their mouth because that can quickly affect the entire school culture.

The term *sour note* depicted an unfortunate and unpleasant event. Danielle’s use of this term indicated that she recognized that a school’s orientation could produce effects beyond simply how a person is received into a school, that it had the ability to influence their initial assessment of the school.

Participants in this study described numerous ways their school made first impressions when they arrived in their new countries. Sharon conveyed that that for her it was always the little things schools do, or don’t do, that made people feel welcomed. She described arriving in a new country and being greeted nicely at the airport. There was a package of food for her in her apartment which she expressed was very much appreciated. She then described “So, I had a loaf of bread, I had pot noodles, but I didn't have a kettle to cook the pot noodles and I didn't have knives and forks and things like that.” She explained that it was the little things, the attention to small details, that really impacted how she felt about her new school and environment.

Zoe and Grant described having great first impressions of their schools due to the way they were welcomed. Zoe described being picked up at the airport by the business manager and a driver and taken to her accommodation. Her house, she recounted, was outfitted with brand new kitchen utensils, new towels and bed sheets, and a package of food and snacks. She was given an
envelope of local currency to get her started and was given directions if she was interested in shopping. Feeling genuinely cared for during the first few weeks, she described, made her very happy. Grant expressed the “massive difference” being warmly greeted by his school had on him and his wife as they arrived in their new country:

For me, walking into the house they've given us and there is a basket of fruit on the table. Me and my wife straight away like, you know that's really nice. It's a simple touch but something that makes you feel valued and that they're going to help you.

Through his description, Grant appeared to share with Sharon the opinion that it was the little things that made the difference in feeling welcomed.

**Theme 4: Integration into the Local Community Promotes Independence**

Seven of the nine participants discussed the importance of integrating into the local community and the challenges presented by the language barrier while living in a foreign country. Four of the seven participants who discussed integration into the host culture shared challenges they faced because of a language barrier. Another four participants expressed that they felt it was critical for international school teachers to develop social networks outside of the school. Integrating into the local community, it was described, allowed teachers some separation from work, better work-life balance, and the ability to become more independent outside of work. David felt that for expatriate international school teachers, the development of a social life after the school day finished was imperative. The ability to communicate in the local language was described as allowing teachers more independence outside of school. Linden expressed that it was much easier to get by when you could speak the local language.
Subtheme 1: Minimizing the language barrier allows for greater integration.

Learning the local language, some participants felt, made getting by day to day a lot easier for expatriate teachers. Danielle mentioned that not being able to speak the local language felt very isolating. Linden, who happened to be fluent in the local language reported that his language ability allowed him to blend into the host culture easily. Another benefit, he recounted, was that he was able to communicate with many of his students’ parents who were not able to speak English. Apart from a life outside of school, Zoe felt that when teachers do not learn the local language, it could cause a divide between the local and the expatriate staff. This divide, she believed, could produce an uncomfortable working environment that could have a negative effect on staff morale.

Sharon stated that one difficulty in learning the host language was that the language of instruction in most international schools was English. Speaking English all day, every day, she described, made it hard to learn another language. She noted that having private lessons would have been useful had her schools provided some time at the end of the school day for language lessons.

Zoe explained that many international schools offered language lessons to their staff in order to help them develop independence. Originally, during her first year at one school, she participated in local language lessons. These lessons, she described, took place during school hours, but after classes had commenced. She explained that as she was still new at the school, she had to stop going to the lessons as she needed more time to complete her work. Learning the host language, she felt, would have positively affected staff morale. She explained that by learning the host language, “it'd feel more like home having actual people who we would consider real friends rather than colleagues, who are actually from here instead of just a bunch of us who socialized but
none of us are from here.” From her description, it seemed that Zoe felt that by learning the local language, she could have developed deeper friendships on her own, as opposed to simply developing relationships with expatriate teachers from her school.

**Subtheme 2: Developing a social life outside of school generates a greater support network.** Although participants expressed that they fostered very strong social relationships with their colleagues, the need for friendships outside of the school community was also conveyed. *Insular* is defined as a characteristic of an isolated people who reflect a narrow viewpoint (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Two participants described the social dynamics of working in an international school community as insular. Marie noted the importance of developing relationships outside of school:

> When you're by yourself in another country and the only thing you have in common is your work with people, that becomes the thing that you share and so those relationships become I think much more influential. When you can balance work relationships with carving out relationships outside of school I think that makes for a happier, healthier overseas teacher.

Marie described how work relationships within an international school were influential, and that teachers could have been happier and healthier if they had developed outside relationships. This indicated that she believed that the insular nature of international school teaching communities could have a negative effect on teachers. Sharon stated that she felt a healthy social life outside of school had an impact on morale as it helped teachers to cope with day to day frustrations. She explained that “If something goes wrong, you can go out, you can see your other friends, you can just forget about it.” She further explained that if the people a teacher was socializing with were dealing with the same situation, when they went out, they probably talked about the issues at school. This, she noted, didn’t allow teachers to get a break from school politics.
Sharon reaffirmed Marie’s opinion of the need for international school teachers to develop networks and relationships outside of the school community. She described challenges of working and living within an international school community and the need for a caring environment. School relationships, she described, are:

Very much more important, even down to the relationships with the other teachers. It can make or break you, how your relationships are with other teachers. And if you make a mistake socially, it's very hard to come back from that, because it's quite an insular community.

Her use of the phrase *make or break you* when describing social relationships indicated that she felt that social missteps within the school had the potential to affect a teacher’s social relationships. Sharon explained that she felt it was simply unhealthy for teachers to spend all their free time with other teachers. Maey agreed having a social group outside of the school provided her with a different perspective. Being part of a church group, she explained, allowed her and the other members to share their lives and experiences. Through this interaction, she explained, she was able to share feelings, like missing her family back home, and discuss how they overcome these hurdles.

When discussing the social needs of teachers, some participants described how they have experienced how international schools attempted to provide social opportunities for teachers outside of the school community. Sharon noted that it was very important for teachers to “find outside groups and encourage people to find outside groups where they can have a life outside of school.” She explained that this would be closer to what teachers would do in their home counties and it would give teachers “a wider range of support, not just the teachers at school.” David acknowledged the need for teachers to develop a life outside of school and expressed that he felt it affected staff morale. He described a strategy employed by one school he worked at:
They give 5,000 yen a month, so about 45 USD a month to every faculty and staff member to do whatever they want with it for your, I guess, wellness, I guess. Some people, they put it towards a gym membership. Some people put it towards language lessons, but 5,000 yen a month to do whatever you want with. Now, you have to report it though. I mean, you had to be paying for something that demonstrates, I'm using this to either better myself in some way out of a personal passion or whatever mental health thing like going to the gym.

David described that this strategy allowed his school to provide teachers with an incentive to pursue their personal interests outside of school.

Providing teachers with lists of community contacts and upcoming community events was described as useful by some participants. In one school Marie worked in, two staff members would send out weekly list of upcoming social and cultural events such as pub crawls, cinemas, picnics, and bike rides. The advertised events involved the school community, but also extended beyond the communities the teachers worked in. Marie described a scenario where information on local events provided opportunities for teachers to get involved outside of the school:

What that allowed people to do is to figure well “I want to learn how to sail and there's sailing lessons starting so I'm going to go ahead and go there” and you meet people that have similar interests that maybe are not connected to your school work environment at all.

In her description, Marie mentioned taking part in local events as a way of meeting people with similar interests. This aligned with David’s opinion that it was helpful for teachers to pursue personal interest outside of school.
Conclusions

The goal of this study was to document the factors that expatriate international school teachers believe have an effect on staff morale and job satisfaction. Findings based on nine semi-structured interviews revealed that school leadership, school support, benefits and salary, and opportunities for integration into the host culture have an effect on staff morale within international schools. Participants indicated that trusting relationships with administrators, effective communication, thoughtful and methodical scheduling, and meaningful staff appraisals were valued by international school teachers. The development of mutual, trusting relationships with the school administration significantly affected staff morale according to participants. Feeling appreciated and valued by the administration was influential in promoting staff morale.

Contracts, contract renewals, and inequalities in treatment of staff were mentioned as also having an impact on staff morale. While participants explained that working as an expatriate offered opportunities for financial savings and travel, they also conveyed concerns about the nature of contractual work and inequalities in salary and benefits. As expatriates, participants noted that basic and social needs support from the school, as well as the manner in which teachers are welcomed into the school influenced how teachers felt about their international schools. It was noted that international school communities tend to be insular and that teachers tend to depend on the school community for their basic and social needs.

Integration into the host culture, as mentioned by participants, was affected by the language barrier. The language barrier, as participants illustrated, could limit the development of relationships with the local staff within a school. Not having the ability to speak the local language, it was described, was isolating and hampered teacher independence. Finally, getting involved outside of the school community and developing a separate life away from school was noted as contributing to the health and happiness of international school teachers. While it was
noted that many participants cultivated strong relationships with their co-workers, the
development of outside relationships was reported as necessary in order to build a wider social
and support network. A detailed interpretation of the thematic findings informed by the literature
review will be presented in chapter 5. In addition to the discussion, chapter 5 presents
implications, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future study.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to examine the lived experience of expatriate teachers and how this experience affects staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools. International schools are often portrayed as having a relatively high staff turnover (Chandler, 2010). A high staff turnover, according to Mancuso et. al. (2010) disrupts the quality of education. Guin (2004) noted that the intangible costs of high staff turnover include decreased relational trust between teachers, parents, and administrators, difficulty in implementing a clear curriculum, and “increased strain on working relationships” (p. 3). Bhella (1982) found that student achievement increased when working with teachers with high morale, and achievement decreased under teachers with low morale. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) noted that through the recruiting, hiring, and training of new teachers, teacher turnover may financially impact schools significantly. Guin (2004) claimed that estimates of teacher replacement costs can reach 150% of a teacher’s salary. In contrast, high staff retention, according to Ronfeldt et al. (2013), helps portray a positive picture of the school within the eyes of the community, and can benefit the school financially.

Many connections have been made among teacher satisfaction, morale, attrition, and the retention of teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Greenfield, 2015; Mackenzie, 2007). Perrachione et al. (2008) noted that staff morale and job satisfaction likely affect staff retention. Most of the previous research on teacher morale focused on the factors that contribute to, or impact, staff morale (Lambersky, 2016; Mackenzie, 2007). Mackenzie (2007) noted that staff morale is affected by various factors including the low salary in comparison to other professions, poor student behavior, an excessive workload, inadequate leadership, poor working conditions, and the low professional status of teachers within the community. Perrachione et al. (2008)
concluded in their study on teacher retention that teachers who experience intrinsic motivation, such as job satisfaction, are more likely to remain at a school and in the profession. As staff turnover is costly for international schools (Guin, 2004; Norton, 1999), determining the factors that international school teachers feel affect staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention, may allow school administrators to develop plans to lower staff turnover in their schools. The majority of research regarding staff morale and teacher job satisfaction has been considered from the perspective of teachers working in their home countries. In order to address this gap in the research, a goal of this study was to determine the factors that expatriate teachers feel impact staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools. The following questions were used to guide this study in an effort to come to an understanding of the lived experience of expatriate international school teachers:

1. How do expatriate international school teachers perceive staff morale and teacher job satisfaction?

2. How does the experience of living as an expatriate affect staff morale and job satisfaction for international school teachers?

Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory, Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy, and culture shock theory (Winkelman, 1994) were applied to this study to understand the experience of international school teachers working in foreign countries. Herzberg’s (2017) two-factor theory identified the factors that lead to job satisfaction and motivation (Luthans, 2011). Luthans (2011) described that the factors that have an effect on motivation are divided into two categories: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are those elements that provide motivation, while hygiene factors are those measures put in place to prevent dissatisfaction.

Maslow’s hierarchy, according to McLeod (2017), states that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs. This theory is often depicted as a 5-tier pyramid with the most basic needs at
the lowest level, and self-actualization at the top level. The most basic needs are physiological, safety, and social needs. According to this theory, for a person to be sufficiently motivated to challenge the upper levels, the basic needs at the lower levels of the pyramid must first be met. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained Maslow’s hierarchy in relation to staff morale. They noted that unless the physiological, safety, and social needs are met, individual teachers are likely to have low morale.

Winkelman (1994) described culture shock as “a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture” (p. 121). It is further described by Elmer (2002) as occurring “when you experience frustration from not knowing the rules or having the skills for adjusting to a new culture” (p. 44). The application of culture shock theory allowed the researcher to examine with participants the cultural adjustment when moving to a new country and how they felt this affected staff morale at their schools.

The lived experience of expatriate international school teachers was explored through semi-structured interviews with nine participants and the collection of related artifacts. Purposeful snowball sampling was applied, and participants were identified through personal contacts, referrals, and professional associations. Participants in this study were all living as expatriates at the time of the interviews and were working in international schools. Participants were located in three different countries, and as such, all interviews took place online.

Once the interview recordings were transcribed, they were sent to participants for member checking. The analysis of the interview data was guided by a process described by Smith et al. (2009). The recommended process involved reading and re-reading the transcriptions, initial coding, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, and finally searching for patterns across transcripts. The initial coding was broken into three discrete processes: descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual
comments. Once the initial coding was completed, the researcher began to look for connections between the comments. Through the coding process, emergent themes and finally superordinate themes were identified.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the identified themes and the relevant literature. Following the interpretation, the implications of the study are presented with connections to the identified themes. Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future action and further inquiry into the phenomenon of teacher morale and job satisfaction in international schools.

**Interpretation of Findings**

The superordinate themes presented in this section describe the factors that participants felt affected staff morale within international schools. In discussing the findings of an IPA study, Smith et al. (2009) suggested examining the data in a wider context and engaging “in a dialogue between your findings and the existing literature” (p. 112). The following discussion of the superordinate themes is presented utilizing this approach.

**Positive Interactions with School Leadership Promote High Staff Morale**

The development of positive, supportive, and trusting relationships with administrators was indicated as valued by international school teachers. Participants expressed that feeling valued and appreciated by school administration had a positive effect on staff morale. This aligns with the findings presented by Aldridge and Fraser (2015), who concluded that job satisfaction is impacted by support from the school administration. Ingersoll (2001) suggested that one strategy for improving job satisfaction is to maximize the support school principals provide for their teachers. Similarly, Noddings (2014) explained that it is difficult to maintain high morale when teachers do not feel respected or trusted. Participant accounts in this study align with Mackenzie (2007) who found that “morale is a by-product of visible, demonstrated support and respect from those who administer the system” (p. 95). As a result, it is not surprising that participants in this
study felt that their level of morale and job satisfaction was linked to the support of their school’s administration. Effective communication, thoughtful scheduling, and meaningful staff appraisals were also indicated as having an effect on staff morale.

**Effective communication.** While the effect communication has on morale hasn’t been directly identified in the literature, Lambersky (2016) concluded that there was a correlation between the ability of the principal to keep order within the school and staff morale. Participants in his study noted that keeping order within the school was critical and that morale suffered without smooth functioning. Maintaining open and reliable communication, participants in this study noted, made sure that teachers were up to date with what was going on in the school and ensured that school policies were adhered to. The manner in which communication was carried out, and its timing, also had an effect on morale. Participants noted that as morale could move in cycles, administrators should be selective when deciding the best timing for communicating certain initiatives. The timing of communication, especially when introducing something new, it was expressed, could negatively affect staff morale. Participants also expressed that school administrators should avoid last minute communication as it could cause anxiety for teachers. This aligns with Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) who found time pressure to be a main contributor to the stresses experienced by teachers. They further noted that as a teacher there are often too many tasks needing to be completed without ample time, and that interruptions during times of needed concentration were frequent.

**Scheduling.** Participants in this study expressed that teacher scheduling can have an effect on morale. This view aligns with the findings presented by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015), who noted that workload and time pressure were major contributors to stresses experienced by teachers. Rhodes et al. (2004) indicated that a primary cause for dissatisfaction as a teacher was the workload. Mackenzie (2007) reported that the excessive workload of teachers had a profound
effect on morale and Greenfield (2015) concluded that teacher workload was a major influence on teachers’ decisions to leave the profession. Participants in this study expressed that thoughtful scheduling demonstrated to them that the school administration prioritized teaching, learning, and teacher well-being. In her discussion about teacher morale, Strasser (2014) even suggested involving teachers in developing school schedules and timetables. She explained that there is a need to develop working schedules that meet the personal needs of teachers.

**Staff appraisals.** Participants in this study indicated that staff appraisals, when used for the purpose of professional growth, were useful and contributed to staff morale. This aligns with Mackenzie (2007) who found that opportunities for professional growth were a contributing factor to staff morale. In his discussion on the purposes of teacher evaluation, Marzano (2012) discussed the differences between measuring teachers and developing teachers. His views align with those of participants in this study. He expressed that while both measurement and development of teachers are necessary, evaluation systems need to be both comprehensive, and focus on teacher growth. Collaborative, collegial appraisal systems, as expressed by participants, were viewed as effective and worthwhile. These views align with Danielson (2016), who expressed that “schools should not rely on evaluation as their main engine of teacher improvement” (p. 21). She explained that the role of a school principal in orchestrating teacher evaluations should be to ensure that working together as a staff, the school accomplishes the best possible results with the students under their care. Danielson (2010) concluded that instead of attempting to improve teaching through the rating of teachers, enhancing the individual and collective capacity of all educators through the development of a community of practice should be the priority. Considered together, the views shared by participants are in line with previous research on staff morale and teacher job satisfaction.
Variations in Benefits and Salary Affect Morale

While participants explained that working as an expatriate offered opportunities for financial savings and travel, they also conveyed concerns about the contractual nature of the work and inequalities in salary and benefits. Study participants perceived that issues related to salary and benefits had an effect on staff morale. Contracts, contract renewals, and inequalities in treatment of staff were mentioned as having an impact on staff morale. Working internationally, it was reported, often allows for financial savings, travel, and luxuries such as hiring a house cleaner. The satisfaction with salary and benefits reported by participants contradicted previous research findings based on teachers working in their home countries. Mackenzie (2007) found that 88% of the participants in her study attributed salary to poor morale. Similarly, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) noted that salary was a contributing factor to teacher turnover.

Contracts. The contractual nature of international schools, it was reported by participants, could have an effect on staff morale. It was noted that some schools connect staff appraisals to not only contract renewals but also salary. One participant explained that based on her teacher appraisal, she would receive either a three, five, or seven percent pay raise. This system, it was felt, was used to control teachers and have them conform to the wishes of the administration. Participants also noted that it could be unsettling for teachers when they are offered a one-year contract when other teachers are offered two-year contracts. This, it was noted, could produce anxiety among teachers and elicit negativity. One participant expressed that contracts in international schools are the industry standard and that it is very common for schools to offer either one-year or two-year contracts. While contracts are considered common practice, participants also noted that the uncertainty of knowing whether a continuing contract will be offered was a cause of anxiety and worry.
Inequalities. While participant accounts revealed many benefits of teaching as an expatriate, participants described concerns they had regarding equality. It was reported that in some schools, teacher salaries varied depending on teacher nationality or where teachers were hired from. This inequality, it was reported, had a negative effect on staff morale. Luthans (2011) described that in an organization, an employee’s salary is perceived as a reflection of how much the employee is valued by the administration. Teachers who earn less salary for the same work, or receive fewer benefits, will likely feel less valued by the school administration. Participants in this study described experiences where local staff were on a completely different pay scale and earned significantly less than the overseas staff. It was noted that this inequality seemed to generate a sense of resentment from the group receiving less compensation. Participants noted that although there may have been practical reasons for the differences in pay, such as cultural considerations and local economics, the inequalities in salary were well known. Culture shock, according to Elmer (2002), occurs “when you experience frustration from not knowing the rules or having the skills for adjusting to a new culture” (p. 44). Witnessing the inequalities in how people are compensated and treated when new to a country would have the ability to also add to the culture shock a person could feel.

A Supportive School Promotes Acclimation

When an individual enters an unfamiliar culture, he or she is like a fish out of water (Oberg, 1960). Oberg further explained that people develop a sense of anxiety and frustration and tend to reject the new environment because it causes discomfort. Winkelman (1994) described that a successful adjustment into the new culture “depends on the availability of transition resources necessary for comfortable adaptation in the new culture” (p. 124). It was noted that study participant accounts illustrated that basic and social needs support from the school, as well as the manner in which teachers were welcomed into the school, influenced how
teachers perceived their international schools. This aligns with Winkelman (1994) who explained that the basic needs, like food, housing, and security, must be met before one is able to perform at work and address social, self-esteem, and personal development needs.

Participants in this study described that school orientation programs had a strong influence on how teachers perceived their new schools. As orientation programs set the first impressions a new teacher had with a school, they had the ability to affect staff morale. During school orientations, schools often address a new teacher’s basic needs. It should also be noted that included in the basic needs identified in Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy are the esteem needs of respect and appreciation. Whitaker et al.’s (2009) description aligns with participant views on the importance of a thorough and thoughtful orientation program accounting for new teacher basic needs. Whitaker et al. (2009) noted that unless low-level needs are met, a teacher is unlikely to demonstrate high morale.

Social support networks, according to Winkelman (1994), alleviate many stressors associated with culture shock. He further explained that “managing culture shock requires that one maintain or reestablish a network of primary relations” (p. 124). This aligns with accounts from participants in this study who conveyed that the relationships they developed with coworkers transcended the workplace into their social worlds. It was noted that many participants felt that these relationships developed naturally as the school often became the hub for relationship development. Noddings’ (2015) emphasis on the need for collegiality within a school supported participant views. According to Winkelman (1994), to effectively manage the stresses that often accompany cultural adjustment, people must demonstrate maintenance behaviors. Maintenance behaviors, he described, are “ongoing activities that are necessary for maintaining one’s cultural sense of well-being” (p. 124). Speaking one’s own language, eating food from a person’s home country, and interacting with people from your home culture are
examples of maintenance behaviors. Winkelman’s (1994) description helps to explain participant accounts that the school often becomes the center of social activity in international school communities. Interestingly, participants also noted that the insular nature of international school communities could become unhealthy when staff did not develop outside relationships. Balancing work relationships with outside relationships, it was conveyed, made for a happier, healthier overseas teacher. The importance of balancing these relationships in maintaining high morale was reported by Mackenzie (2007). She noted that when morale is high, teachers feel good about themselves, their colleagues, and their work.

**Integration into the Local Community Promotes Independence**

Participant accounts illustrated the importance of an international school teacher’s integration into the local community. This aligns with Oberg (1960), who explained that getting to know people from the local community assists in the recovery from culture shock. It was reported by participants that developing a life outside of school allowed teachers to develop a wider support network, greater independence, and better work-life balance. A language barrier, it was described, was isolating and hampered teacher independence. Participants conveyed that language and communication challenges made living in a different culture frustrating. This aligns with Sam and Berry (2010) who found that when a person is acculturating into a new place, they can be confronted with challenges in handling everyday situations when they lack the requisite skills to engage with the new culture. Participants in this study further illustrated that language barriers limited the development of relationships with the local staff within their schools. This aligns with Sam and Berry (2010) who noted that “language skills are relevant both for the performance of daily tasks in the new cultural society and in establishing interpersonal relationships in the society” (p. 475). Finally, getting involved outside of the school community,
and developing a separate life away from school, was noted as contributing to the health and happiness of international school teachers.

**Implications**

The results of this study revealed that expatriate international school teachers’ dependence on their schools extends beyond employment. Previous research indicated that teachers in their home countries viewed a supportive administration as having a positive effect on morale and job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Ingersoll, 2011; Rhodes et al., 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). In the case of expatriate international school teachers, according to participants, support from the school transcends the workplace into the personal life. Participants expressed that they depend on their schools for their basic, safety, and social needs more than they would in their home country. Basic needs, according to Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy include the basics of food, water, shelter. Safety needs include physical, emotional, and financial safety. Social needs include a sense of belonging and friendship.

Participants in this study expressed that in addition to support with visas, they depended on their schools for socialization and for accomplishing tasks they would be able to complete on their own in their home country. One participant described that with the difficulties in communication and language, “You almost go back to being a child in many ways and you need someone to help you, hold your hand.” Everyday errands, such as having a parcel delivered from the post office, or making a bank transaction, were challenging and often required support from the school. It is imperative that international schools understand that in addition to simply providing employment, providing for the needs of expatriate teachers is critical in promoting high morale.
**Implication #1**

The results of this study indicate that international school administrators need to be mindful of the contractual nature of international school work. Participants indicated that as opposed to working in many school systems, international school teachers do not have a union and they do not generally have tenure. As most international school contracts tend to be fixed one- or two-year contracts, teachers may feel uneasy due to a lack of job security. Ingersoll (2001) explained that small schools are less likely to provide mechanisms for job security such as tenure and teacher unions. As such, he explained, teachers do not have the protection to voice oppositions or disagreements with school policies, which can likely lead to teacher turnover. International school administrators should be aware that teachers may not share their opinions due to a fear putting their job in jeopardy.

While participants in this study noted that staff appraisals can be a useful tool when utilized for professional growth, administrators must ensure that their purpose and methods are transparent to teachers. Feedback and support for professional growth must be adequate to ensure teachers understand and can perform at the level expected by the school. A lack of professional feedback, it was reported by participants, caused anxiety and worry as teachers did not know if their teaching performance was meeting the expectations of the school administration. These views align with Danielson (2010), who described that in addition to ensuring teacher quality, the purpose of teacher evaluations should be to promote professional learning. She further explained that professional conversations between teachers and colleagues, and between teachers and supervisors, promote this professional growth. Finding time for professional conversations, according to Danielson (2010), can be a challenge for administrators; however, she stressed that “it doesn’t take any longer to do this process well than to do it poorly” (p. 39). When teacher
feedback and professional conversations focus on best teaching practice, she explained, valuable opportunities for growth are fostered.

**Implication #2**

While the development of strong relationships within an international school is critical in ensuring teachers have a social network and support, it is imperative that teachers also develop a social network outside of school. Integration within the local community can provide teachers with wider social and support networks, as well as promote greater independence from the school. It should be noted that included in the basic needs identified in Maslow’s (2013) hierarchy are the social needs of belonging and friendship. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that teachers are not likely to demonstrate high morale if their basic needs are not met. Sam and Berry (2010) explained that when people are acculturating into a new environment, they focus on defining their identity within the new culture and question who they are and to which group they belong. Tajfel and Turner (1986) further described the need for people to belong to groups in order to place themselves within their environment. Developing a social network outside of school could help international school teachers to develop a sense of belonging within their new country.

International school administrators must be mindful of work-life balance and develop strategies for supporting staff in integrating into the local community. Teacher morale, according to Mackenzie (2007), is influenced by personal morale. The factors that influence personal morale, she described, are private and personal. While it is not possible for international school administrators to determine what drives each teacher’s personal morale, they must be mindful that integrating into the local community and developing a life outside of school can have a positive effect on a teacher’s personal morale.
Recommendations for Action

Findings from this study indicated several considerations for the maintenance and improvement of staff morale in international schools. The first recommendation for action requires school leaders to pay added attention to new teacher orientation programs. The second recommendation involves providing support and assistance to teachers in integrating into the host community. The final recommendation for action requires school leaders to direct their attention to staff appraisal systems and consider their effect on staff morale.

Recommendation for Action #1

The first recommendation for action regards new teacher orientation programs. Participants in this study had experience working in a variety of international schools and living in a variety of countries. The importance of providing teachers new to a country with a good first impression was highlighted by participants. The significance of ensuring that teachers feel welcomed and supported through their transition into the school and into the country was expressed.

Culture shock, according to Winkelman (1994), is “a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture” (p. 121). Elmer (2002) defined culture shock as occurring “when you experience frustration from not knowing the rules or having the skills for adjusting to a new culture” (p. 44). Teachers may very well experience culture shock as they move into a new country and attempt to prepare for entrance into a new teaching position. International school administrators should develop an understanding of culture shock and become aware of its symptoms. Developing orientation programs with an understanding of culture shock could allow schools to provide greater support for teachers new to the country. As a result, international school leaders seeking to develop high morale are
encouraged to review their orientation programs for new teachers and develop plans for increased support.

**Recommendation for Action #2**

The second recommendation stemming from this study is connected to integration into the host community. Participants in this study noted the importance of providing opportunities for teachers to develop social networks outside of the school. Integrating into the host culture, it was indicated, allows teachers separation from work, greater independence, and better work-life balance. International schools that seek to raise morale by supporting work-life balance are urged to seek opportunities for staff to engage in social opportunities outside of the school. In his discussion on acculturation, Berry (2005) explained the concept known as behavioral shifts. He described that people will change some of their behaviors, such as the way they speak, eat, or dress, as they adapt to a new culture. One method of making behavior shifts, according to Berry (2005), is called *culture learning*. Through this process people learn new behaviors that are appropriate for living in the new culture (Berry, 1997). Providing opportunities for teachers to interact with members of the wider cultural community can assist with culture learning and acculturation.

Participants also highlighted the benefits of speaking the host language. While learning the local language allows for greater independence and an ability to better blend into the host culture, participants noted that it can also decrease a sense of isolation. Sam and Berry (2010) explained that handling everyday social situations can be a challenge when a person lacks the requisite skills to engage with the new culture. Learned behaviors, Sam and Berry (2010) explained, include intercommunication skills, social norms, and language skills. Providing opportunities for staff to learn the host country language is also highly recommended.
**Recommendation for Action #3**

Finally, the researcher recommends that leaders of international schools that are intent on raising staff morale review their staff appraisal systems. Ensuring that staff appraisal systems are transparent, fair, and are in place to promote professional growth is critical in promoting staff morale. Participants in this study conveyed that as staff appraisals are connected to contract renewals, they could cause anxiety and negatively affect staff morale. When staff appraisals allowed for professional growth through feedback and collegial collaboration, participants believed they were a useful tool.

Participants in Mackenzie’s (2007) study identified a connection between access to relevant professional development and teacher morale. Participants noted that their professional development needs were not being met. While it is common for schools to invest significant funds to professional development, school should focus on developing staff appraisal systems that identify the professional development needs of staff, and then provide training that is relevant to each teacher. International school leaders are recommended to review their staff appraisal systems and invest significant time into making the process fair, transparent, and constructive for all teachers.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the findings of this study, three areas have been identified as opportunities for future study. The first opportunity involves investigating the lived experience of expatriate teachers and their new school orientations. Investigating how teachers perceive staff appraisals is a second possibility for future study. A third recommendation for further study is an investigation into how expatriate international school teachers integrate into their host communities, and how schools can support this integration.
**Recommendation for Further Study #1**

Investigating the lived experience of expatriate teachers and their new school orientations is the first recommendation for future study. An inquiry into how teachers new to a country manage culture shock, and strategies schools employ to assist in the transition would be beneficial for international school teachers. Oberg (1960) noted that when a person is suffering from culture shock, “it is natural for them to try and lean heavily on their compatriots” (p. 146). Learning directly from international teachers the types of support they feel would benefit new teachers is recommended. Understanding how teachers new to a school perceive their orientations and learning how orientations could be improved would provide guidance to international school leaders.

**Recommendation for Further Study #2**

A second possibility for future study involves investigating how teachers perceive staff appraisals. Whitaker et al. (2009) explained that all too often, teacher evaluations are demotivating for teachers and are seen as having little value. They further expressed that, if done correctly, they can be an opportunity to raise the morale and self-worth of teachers in our schools. Whitaker et al. (2009) noted that a challenge for educational leaders is striking a balance between identifying areas for teacher growth while also supporting morale. While staff appraisals are common practice in schools, further study focusing on understanding how they are perceived by teachers could provide school leaders with further insight into how evaluations could be more effectively utilized.

**Recommendation for Further Study #3**

A third recommendation for further study is an investigation into how expatriate international school teachers integrate into their host communities, and how schools can support this integration. When addressing what can be done to overcome culture shock as quickly as
possible, Oberg (1960) explained that “the answer is to get to know the people of the host country” (145). Learning how international school teachers accomplish this would be beneficial to international school administrators in supporting teacher acculturation. Further insight into how expatriate international school teachers develop relationships and social networks outside of the school community could allow school administrators to formulate strategies to assist teachers in getting involved outside of the school community.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis study was to examine the lived experience of expatriate international school teachers and investigate the factors that contribute to staff morale and influence teacher job satisfaction within international schools. Two research questions were used to guide and this study and investigate this phenomenon. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to interpret the interview transcripts generated from the semi-structured interviews. Four superordinate themes emerged as a result of the analysis. These superordinate themes revealed that expatriate international school teachers feel that positive interactions with school leaders, inequalities in salary and benefits, a supportive school climate, and integration into the host community all have an impact on staff morale. The development of trusting relationships and feeling appreciated and valued were indicated to have a positive effect on morale. The contractual nature of international schools, and how inequalities in salary and benefits exist were also identified as having an impact on morale. Participants expressed that as many expatriate international school teachers lived far from their families, there was a need to depend on their schools for social and basic needs support. Feeling welcomed into the school and receiving assistance from the school in settling into the new country was conveyed as affecting morale. Participants expressed that a teacher’s ability to integrate into the host community and develop a life outside of the often insular international school community,
were important in developing independence and work-life balance. The language barrier, it was noted, can complicate going about daily life and integrating into the host community. This study confirms that expatriate international school teachers tend to rely on their schools for more than employment. Social lives tend to revolve around the school, and the school is often depended upon for basic, social, and emotional needs.
REFERENCES


Appendix A
Participation Request Letter

Dear Colleague,

My name is Kevin Yoshihara. I am a doctoral candidate at The University of New England, and I am seeking volunteers who would like to assist me in conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. You would be assisting in the research on staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention in international schools.

Criteria for participation are:
- You must currently be living as an expatriate.
- You must currently be working in an international school.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview.

The interview should take between 45 and 60 minutes of your time. Participant name, location, and the information gained from the interviews will be completely confidential and anonymous. During the interview, I will ask you to tell me about your experiences as an expatriate working in an international school, and about the factors you feel attribute to staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention in international schools.

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face (if the participant is located in or close to Tokyo), or via an online medium. Each interview will be recorded, and additional notes will be taken. Participation is entirely voluntary and please be aware that you are free to withdraw from the study at any point in time; even after we start the interview.

If you are interested and able to assist me with my research, please respond to this email with your preferred contact information so that we can schedule your interview.

If you have any questions or comments about this research, you can contact either me at kyoshihara@une.edu or by telephone at 81-907-181-8143.

Thank you for your time and consideration to this request.

Kevin Yoshihara
Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *Teacher Satisfaction and Staff Morale in International Schools*

Principal Investigator(s): Kevin Yoshihara, Graduate Student, University of New England, 81-3-907-181-8143 or kyoshihara@une.edu

Introduction:
- Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
- The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experience of expatriate teachers and how this experience affects staff morale and job satisfaction in international schools.

Who will be in this study?
- You are eligible for this study as you are living as an expatiate and working in an international school.
- The goal is to have 5-8 participants.

What will I be asked to do?
- You will be asked to take part in an interview about staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention in international schools. Interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be arranged at a mutually acceptable time for the participant and the researcher. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or online and all interviews will be recorded.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?
• There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.
• You may opt out of the study at any time if you are not comfortable with the study process.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

• This study may benefit expatriate international school teachers as school administrators plan changes to improve staff morale, job satisfaction, and retention.

**What will it cost me?**

• There will be no cost involved for you to participate in this study.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

• Privacy will be protected at all costs.
• The researcher will not disclose your identity or your status as a participant to any other participants or the public. Participants will choose a pseudonym for the study. Only the researcher and the participant will know their real name.
• Your name will not be used in the final written findings of the study.

**How will my data be kept confidential?**

• This study is designed to be confidential, this means that no one, can link the data you provide to you, or identify you as a participant.
• All data collected during the study will be stored on a password protected computer.
• Once the study is complete, all data will be destroyed.
• No data with identifiable information will be shared at any time.
• Please indicate if data collection and participation are anonymous.
• A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.

**What are my rights as a research participant?**

• Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University.
• You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
• If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

What other options do I have?

• You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

• The researcher conducting this study is Kevin Yoshihara. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact him at 81-3-907-181-8143 or through e-mail at kyoshihara@une.edu. You may also contact Joel Lowsky at jlowsky@une.edu.

• If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact Joel Lowsky at jlowsky@une.edu.

• If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

• You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

______________________________  _______________________
Participant’s signature or Date

Legally authorized representative
Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

__________________________  ________________________
Researcher’s signature       Date

__________________________
Printed name
Appendix C

Interview Guide

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As you know, I am enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of New England and this research is for my dissertation.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and with your consent I would like to record our interview, transcribe and analyze it at a later date, and then use the findings in my dissertation.

Your identity or your status as a participant will not be disclosed to any other participants or the public. I will ask you to choose a pseudonym for this study. Only you and I will know your real name and your name will not be used in the final written findings of the study. You can opt out of answering any questions you are uncomfortable answering.

Do I have your consent?

First, please choose a pseudonym for this study.

I would next like to gather some background information if I may:

How many years have you been teaching internationally?

How many years have you been at your current school?

How many years have you been teaching?

How old are you?

Marital status?

1. Can you describe for me the experience of working in a foreign culture?
   a. What are the challenges?

2. Can you describe for me the staff morale at your current international school?
   a. What factors have contributed to this?
   b. What do you think could improve this?

3. Please describe your current level of job satisfaction?
   a. Why do you think it is like this?
   b. What do you think could improve this?

4. Can you share with me a time when you felt happy about your current position?
a. Why do you think it is like this?

5. How did you feel when you moved to the country you are currently living in? If so, did your school have any programs in place to provide support?

6. When you moved to your current country, did you feel that your basic needs were being met?
   
a. Where did this support come from?
   
b. Did your school attempt to provide for these?

7. What factors do you feel would lead you to remain at your current school?